

BLACKIE'S ENGLISH TEXTS
EDITED BY W. H. D. ROUSE, LITT.D.

Thomas Deloney

Thomas of Reading
and
John Winchcombe



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INTRODUCTION

These stories are taken from two books compiled by Thomas Deloney, *Jack of Newbury* and *Thomas of Reading*. The former was written not later than 1597, but the first extant edition dates from 1626. The latter was written after 1579, and the first extant edition dates from 1623. The books have been shortened by omissions, and a few alterations made, as in the imitation of dialect. We have to thank the Clarendon Press for leave to use their texts, published with scholarly care by Mr. F. O. Mann, in his *Works of Thomas Deloney*. This is one of the most entertaining works ever published by the Clarendon Press.

Thomas Deloney died in 1600, but when or where he was born is not known. He was a silk-weaver himself, and it is evident that he knew all about the craft. He wrote a large number of ballads, in which public opinion then used to find expression. But his most characteristic work is seen in his story-books—these two and a third called *The Gentle Craft*. The books are evidently founded on tradition, and they include a number of jests and episodes which he has gathered from earlier books of the same sort.

Deloney gives an inimitable picture of English life among the humbler people; the conversations are full of merriment and good spirits—"that simple mirth of my people that keepeth high courage alive", as Queen Elizabeth said, with truth that has of late been amply made manifest. We here take our seats in the English tavern, and listen to all the gossip of the place; we see the sturdy independence of the master craftsman, his pride in his work, his care for his workmen, and the solid satisfaction of such a life when the workman used hand and brain instead of machines. The glimpses of higher society also are not without instruction: Cardinal Wolsey, as seen by the people, shows a new side.

The humour of the stories can speak for itself, but it may not be out of place to indicate that Deloney was a skilful man of letters. The story of Old Cole's murder is set forth in a way that recalls the relentless movement of fate in a Greek tragedy. Perhaps it may lend a new interest to the village of Colnbrook when some reader may have to pass it on his journey from Hyde Park Corner.

THE PLEASANT HISTORY OF THE SIX
WORTHY YEOMEN OF THE WEST

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In the days of King Henry the First, who was the first king that instituted the High Court of Parliament, there lived nine men, which for the trade of clothing were famous throughout all England. Which art in those days was held in high reputation, both in respect of the great riches that thereby were gotten, as also for the benefit it brought to the whole commonwealth. The younger sons of knights and gentlemen, to whom their fathers would leave no lands, were most commonly preferred to learn this trade, to the end that thereby they might live in good estate, and drive forth their days in prosperity. Among all crafts this was the only chief, for that it was the greatest merchandise, by the which our country became famous through all nations. And it was verily thought, that the one half of the people in the land lived in those days thereby, and in such good sort, that in the commonwealth there were few or no beggars at all: poor people (whom God lightly blesseth with most children) did by means of this occupation so order them, that, by the time they were come to be six

or seven years of age, they were able to get their own bread. Idleness was then banished our coast, so that it was a rare thing to hear of a thief in those days. Therefore it was not without cause that clothiers were then both honoured and loved: among whom these nine persons, in this King's days were of great credit: viz. Thomas Cole of Reading, Gray of Gloucester, Sutton of Salisbury, Fitzalan of Worcester (commonly called William of Worcester), Tom Dove of Exeter, and Simon of Southampton alias Supbroath; who were by the King called "The six worthy Husbands of the West"; then there were three living in the north, that is to say, Cuthbert of Kendal, Hodgekins of Halifax, and Martin Byram of Manchester. Every one of these kept a great number of servants at work: spinners, carders, weavers, fullers, dyers, shearmen, and rowers, to the great admiration of all those that came into their houses to behold them.

Now you shall understand, these gallant clothiers, by reason of their dwelling places, separated themselves into three several companies. Gray of Gloucester, William of Worcester, and Thomas of Reading, because their journey to London was all one way, conversed commonly together. And Dove of Exeter, Sutton of Salisbury, and Simon of Southampton, they in like sort kept company the one with the other, meeting ever all together at Basingstoke. And the three northern clothiers did the like, who commonly did not meet till they came to Bosom Inn in London.

Moreover, for the love and delight that these western

men had each in other's company, they did so provide that their wains and themselves should ever meet upon one day in London at Jarret's Hall, surnamed the Giant, for that he surpassed all other men of that age both in stature and strength: whose merriments and memorable deeds I will set down unto you in this following discourse.

CHAPTER I

How King Henry sought the Favour of all his Subjects,
especially of the Clothiers

This King Henry, who for his great learning and wisdom was called Beau-clerk, being the third son to the renowned Conqueror; after the death of his brother William Rufus, took upon him the government of the land in the absence of his second brother Robert, Duke of Normandy, who at this time was at war among the Infidels, and was chosen King of Jerusalem, the which he, for the love he bare to his own country, refused, and with great honour returned from the Holy Land: of whose coming when King Henry understood, knowing he would make claim to the crown, sought by all means possible to win the good will of the nobility, and to get the favour of the commons by courtesy: for the obtaining whereof he did them many favours, thereby the better to strengthen himself against his brother.

It chanced on a time, as he, with one of his sons, and divers of his nobility, rode from London towards Wales

to appease the fury of the Welshmen, which then began to raise themselves against his authority, that he met with a great number of wains laden with cloth, coming to London. And, seeing them still drive one after another so many together, demanded whose they were.

The wains-men answered in this sort: "Cole's of Reading," quoth they.

Then by and by the King asked another, saying: "Whose cloth is all this?"

"Old Cole's," quoth they.

And again anon after he asked the same question to others, and still they answered: "Old Cole's."

And it is to be remembered that the King met them in such a place, so narrow and strait, that he with the rest of his train were fain to stand close to the hedge whilst the carts passed by: the which at that time being in number above two hundred, it was near hand an hour ere the King could get room to be gone. So that by his long stay he began to be displeased, although the admiration of that sight did much qualify his fury: breaking out in discontent by reason of his stay, he said he thought Old Cole had got a commission for all the carts in the country to carry his cloth.

"And how if we have," quoth one of the wains-men, "doth that grieve you, good sir?"

"Yes, good sir," said our King, "what say you to that?"

The fellow, seeing the King to bend his brows, though he knew not what he was, yet being abashed, he answered

thus: "Why, sir, if you be angry, nobody can hinder you; for possible, sir, you have anger at commandment."

The King, seeing him in uttering of his words to quiver and shake, laughed heartily at him, as well in respect of his simple answer, as at his fear: and soon after the last wain went by, which gave passage unto him and his nobles. Thereupon entering into communication of the commodity of clothing, the King gave order, at his home return, to have Old Cole brought before his Majesty, to the intent he might have conference with him, noting him to be a subject of great ability. But by the time he came within a mile of Stanes, he met another company of wains in like sort laden with cloth, whereby the King was driven into a further admiration: and demanding whose they were, answer was made in this sort: "They be goodman Sutton's of Salisbury, good sir."

And by the time a score of they were past, he asked again, saying: "Whose are these?"

"Sutton's of Salisbury," quoth they: and so still, as often as the King asked that question, they answered: "Sutton's of Salisbury."

"God send me many such Suttons," said the King.

And thus the farther he travelled westward, more wains and more he met continually: upon which occasion he said to his nobles, that it would never grieve a King to die for the defence of a fertile country and faithful subjects. "I always thought," quoth he, "that England's

valour was more than her wealth, yet now I see her wealth sufficient to maintain her valour, which I will seek to cherish in all I may, and with my sword keep myself in possession of that I have: kings and lovers can brook no partners: and therefore let my brother Robert think, that although he was heir to England by birth, yet I am King by possession. All his favourers I must account my foes, and will serve them as I did the ungrateful Earl of Shrewsbury, whose lands I have seeked, and banished his body."

But now we will leave the King to his journey into Wales, and, waiting his return home, in the meantime tell you the meeting of these jolly clothiers at London.

CHAPTER II

How William of Worcester, Gray of Gloucester,
and Old Cole of Reading met together

When Gray of Gloucester and William of Worcester were come to Reading, according to their custom, they always called Old Cole to have his company to London, who also duly attended their coming, having provided a good breakfast for them: and, when they had well refreshed themselves, they took their horses and rode on towards the city: and in their journey William of Worcester asked them if they had not heard of the Earl of Montaigne his escape out of the land?

"What, is he fled?" quoth Gray.

"I muse much at the matter, being in such great regard with the King as he was: but I pray you, do you not know the cause of his going?" quoth Cole.

"The common report," quoth Gray, "is this: that the covetous carl, who, through a greedy desire, never left begging of the King for one thing or other, and his request being now denied him, of mere obstinacy and willful frowardness, hath banished himself out of the land, and quite forsaken the County of Cornwall, having made a vow never to set foot in England again; and, as report goeth, he with the late banished Earl of Shrewsbury have joined themselves with Robert Duke of Normandy against the King, the which action of theirs hath inflamed the King's wrath, that their ladies and their children are turned quite out of doors, succourless and friendless, so that, as it is told me, they wander up and down the country like forlorn people, and although many do pity them, yet few do receive them."

"A lamentable hearing," quoth William of Worcester. And with that, casting their eyes aside, they espied Tom Dove with the rest of his companions come riding to meet them, who, as soon as they were come thither, fell into such pleasant discourse as did shorten the long way they had to Colebrook, where always at their coming towards London they dined: and being once entered into their inn, according to old custom, good cheer was provided for them: for these clothiers were the chiefest guests that travelled along the way: and this was as sure as an Act of Parliament, that Tom Dove could not digest

his meat without music, nor drink wine without company, so that his hostess, being a merry wench, would oftentimes call in two or three of her neighbours to keep him company; where, ere they parted, they were all made as merry as pies.

Now when they came to London, they were welcome to the host Jarrat the Giant: and, as soon as they were alighted, they were saluted by the merchants, who waited their coming thither, and always prepared for them a costly supper, where they commonly made their bargain, and upon every bargain made, they used to send some token to the clothiers' wives. The next morning they went to the hall, where they met the northern clothiers, who greeted one another in this sort:

"What, my masters of the west, well met! What cheer? what cheer?"

"Even the best cheer our merchants could make us," quoth Gray.

"Then you could not choose but fare well," quoth Hodgekins.

"An you be weary of our company, adieu," quoth Sutton.

"Not so," said Martin, "but shall we not have a game ere we go?"

"Yes, faith, for an hundred pounds."

"Well said, Old Cole," said they: and with that Cole and Gray went to the dice with Martin and Hodgekins; and the dice running on Hodgekin's side, Cole's money began to waste.

“ Now by my faith,” quoth Cole, “ my money shrinks as bad as northern cloth.”

When they had played long, Gray stepped to it, and recovered again the money that Cole had lost. But while they were thus playing, the rest being delighted in contrary matters, every man satisfied his own humour. Tom Dove called for music, William of Worcester for wine, Sutton set his delight in hearing merry tales, Simon of Southampton got him into the kitchen, and to the pottage pot goes he, for he esteemed more a mess of pottage than a venison pasty. And you shall understand, that always when they went to dice, they got into Bosom’s Inn, which was so-called of his name that kept it, who being a sloven went always with his nose in his bosom, and one hand in his pocket, the other on his staff, figuring forth a description of cold winter, for he always wore two coats, two caps, two or three pair of stockings, and a high pair of shoes over which he drew on a great pair of lined slippers, and yet would oft complain of cold, wherefore of all men generally he was called Old Bosom, and his house Bosom’s Inn.

And within a while after they paid the shot, and departed thence to Jarrat’s Hall, where they went to their lodging; and the next day they took their way homeward all together: and coming to Colebrook they took up their lodging, and it was Cole’s custom to deliver his money to the good wife of the house to keep it till morning, which in the end turned to his utter destruction, as hereafter will be shown.

CHAPTER III

How Gray's Wife of Gloucester with one or two of her Neighbours went to the Fair where Servants came to be hired,
and how she took the Earl of Shrewsbury's
Daughter into her Service.

It was wont to be an old custom in Gloucestershire, that a certain time in the year, all young men and maidens resorted to a fair that was kept near Gloucester, there to be ready for any that would come to hire them: the young men stood all on a row on the one side, and the maidens on the other. It came to pass, that the Earl of Shrewsbury's daughter, whose father was lately banished, being driven into great distress, and weary with travels, as one whose delicate life was never used to such toil, sat her down upon the highway side, making this lamentation: "O false and deceitful world," quoth she, "who is in thee that wishes not to be rid of thee, for thy extremities are great? Of all misfortune it is most unhappy to be fortunate: and by this misfortune came my fall. Was ever good lady brought to this extremity? What is become of my rare jewels, my rich array, my sumptuous fare, my waiting servants, my many friends, and all my vain pleasures? My pleasure is banished by displeasure, my friends turned to foes, my servants gone, my feasting turned to fasting, my rich array consumed to rags, and my jewels deck out my chiefest enemies. Therefore of all things the meanest state is best: poverty with surety is better than honour mixed with fear. Seeing God hath

allotted me to this misery of life, I will frame my heart to embrace humility, and carry a mind answerable to my misfortunes. Fie on this vain title of ladyship, how little doth it avail the distressed! No, no, I must forget my birth, and think no more on my father's house, where I was wont to be served: now will I learn to serve, and plain Meg shall be my name: good Lord grant I may get a good service; nay, any service shall serve, where I may have meat, drink, and apparel."

She had no sooner spoken these words, but she spied a couple of maidens coming towards her, who were going to the fair: and bidding her good-morrow, they asked her if she went to the fair?

"Aye, marry," quoth she, "I am a poor man's child that is out of service, and I hear that at the Statue folks do come of purpose to hire servants."

"True it is," said the maidens, "and thither go we for the same purpose, and would be glad of your company."

"With a good will, and I am right glad of yours," said she, "beseeching you, good maidens, you will do me the favour to tell me what service were best for me: for the more to blame my parents, they would never put me forth to know anything."

"What can you do," quoth the maidens, "can you brew and bake, make butter and cheese, and reap corn well?"

"No verily," said Margaret, "but I would be right glad to learn to do anything whatsoever it be."

"If you could spin or card," said another, "you might do excellent well with a clothier, for that is the best service I know. There you shall be sure to fare well, and so live merrily."

Then Margaret wept, saying: "Alas, what shall I do? I was never brought up to do these things."

"What, can you do nothing?" quoth they.

"Nothing truly," quoth she, "that is good for anything. I can read and write, and sew; some skill have I in my needle, and a little on my lute: but this, I see, will profit me nothing."

"Good heavens," quoth they, "are you bookish? We did never hear before of a maid that could read and write. And although you can do no other thing, yet possibly you may get a service, if you can behave yourself mannerly."

"I pray you," quoth another, "seeing you are bookish, will you do so much as to read a love-letter that is sent me, for I was at a friend's with it, and he was not at home, and so I know not what is in it."

"I pray you let me see it," quoth Margaret, "and I will show you." Whereupon she read as followeth:

"O Jenny, my joy, I die for thy love,
And now I hear say that thou dost remove:
And therefore, Jenny, I pray thee recite,
Where shall I meet thee soon at night.

For with my master no more will I stay,
But for thy love I will run away:
O Jenny, Jenny, thou putttest me to pain,
That thou no longer wilt here remain.

I will wear out my shoes of neat's leather,
But thou and I will meet together,
And in spite of fortune, rat, or mouse,
We will dwell together in one house.

For who doth not esteem of thee,
Shall have no service done of me:
Therefore, good Jenny, have a care
To meet poor Fragment at the fair."

"Now, good soul," quoth Jenny, "I think he be the kindest young man in the world."

The rest answered that he seemed no less.

"And surely it appeareth that he is a pretty witty fellow," quoth one of them, "how finely he hath written this letter in rime: trust me, I will give you a good thing, if you will let me have a copy of it to send to my sweetheart."

"That you shall, with all my heart." And so coming to the fair, they took up their standing.

Within a while after, good wife Gray of Gloucester came thither to store herself of divers commodities; and when she had bought what she would, she told her neighbour she had great need of a servant or twain: "Therefore," quoth she, "good neighbour, go with me, and let me have your opinion."

"With a good will," said her neighbour, and together they went: and looking and viewing the maidens over, she took special notice of Margaret.

"Believe me," quoth she, "there stands a very proper maiden, and one of a modest and comely countenance."

"Verily," said the neighbour, "so she is, as ever I looked upon."

The maiden, seeing them to view her so well, was so abashed, that a scarlet colour overspread her lily cheeks, which the woman perceiving, came unto her, and asked if she were willing to serve.

The maid with a low courtesy, and a most gentle speech, answered it was the only cause of her coming.

"Can you spin or card?" said good wife Gray.

"Truly Dame," said she, "though my cunning therein be but small, my good will to learn is great: and I trust my diligence shall content you."

"What wages will you take?" quoth good wife Gray.

"I will refer that," said Margaret, "to your conscience and courtesy, desiring no more than I shall deserve."

Then asking what countrywoman, the maiden wept, saying: "Ah, good Dame, I was born in Shropshire, of poor parents, and yet not so needy as unfortunate, but death having ended their sorrows, hath left me to the cruelty of these envious times, to finish my parents' tragedy with my troubles."

"What, maiden," quoth her dame, "have you a care to do your business, and to live in God's law, and you shall have no care to regard Fortune's frowns." And so they went home together.

Now, so soon as the good man saw her, he asked his wife where she had that maiden? She said: "At the fair."

"Why then," quoth he, "thou hast brought all the

fair away, and I doubt it were better for us to send the fair to another town than to keep the fair here."

"Why man," quoth she, "what mean you by that?"

"Woman, I mean this, that she will prove a loadstone to draw the hearts of all my men after her; and so we shall have wise service done of all sides."

Then said his wife: "I hope, husband, Margaret will have a better care both to her own credit, and our commodity, than so: and so let her alone to look to such matters."

"Is thy name Margaret?" quoth her master. "Proper is thy name to thy person, for thou art a pearl indeed, orient and rich in beauty."

So to supper they went, and, because Margaret showed herself of finest behaviour above the rest, she was appointed to wait on the table. And it is to be understood, that Gray did never eat his meat alone, but had some of his neighbours with him, before whom he called the maid, saying: "Margaret, come hither." Now because there was another of the same name in the house, she made answer. "I call you not, maiden," quoth he, "but Margaret with the lily-white hand." After which time she was ever called so.

CHAPTER IV

How the King's Majesty sent for the Clothiers and of the
Sundry Favours which he did them

King Henry providing for his voyage into France against King Lewis and Robert Duke of Normandy, his own brother, committed the government of the realm in his absence to the Bishop of Salisbury, a man of great wisdom and learning, whom the King esteemed highly: and afterward he thought good to send for the chief clothiers of England, who, according to the King's appointment, came to Court; and, having licence to come before his Majesty, he spake to this effect.

“ The strength of a King is the love and friendship of his people, and he governs most surely over his realm that ruleth with justice and mercy: for he ought to fear many, whom many do fear. Therefore the governors of the commonwealth ought to observe two special precepts: the one is, that they so maintain the profit of the commons, that whatsoever in their calling they do, they refer it thereunto: the other, that they be always as well careful over the whole commonwealth as over any part thereof; lest while they uphold the one, the other be brought to utter decay. And forasmuch as I do understand, and have partly seen, that you the clothiers of England are no small benefit to the weal public, I thought it good to know from your own mouths, if there be anything not granted that may benefit you, or any other thing to be removed that doth hurt you. The great desire I

have to maintain you in your trades hath moved me herunto. Therefore boldly say what you would have in the one thing or the other, and I will grant it you."

With that they all fell down on their knees, and desired God to save his Majesty: and withal requested three days respite to put in their answer: which was granted, and thereupon they departed.

When the clothiers had well considered of these matters, at length they thought meet to request of his Majesty for their first benefit, that all the cloth measures through the land might be of one length, whereas to their great disadvantage before, every good town had a several measure, the difficulty whereof was such that they could not keep them in cecory, nor know how to keep their reckonings.

The second thing whereof they found themselves grieved was this, that the people would not take cracked money, though it were never so good silver: whereupon it came to pass, that the clothiers and divers others, receiving great sums of money, did take among it much cracked money, which served them to no use, because it would not go current, but lay upon their hands without profit or benefit, whereof they prayed reformation.

The third was a grief whereof Hodgekins of Halifax complained, and that was, that whereas the town of Halifax lived altogether upon clothing, and by reason of false Boderers and other evil-minded persons, they were oft robbed, and had their clothes carried out of

their fields where they were drying, that it would please his Majesty to grant the town this privilege, that whatsoever he was that was taken stealing their cloth, might presently without any further trial be hanged up.

When the day of their appearance approached, the clothiers came before the King, and delivered up their petition in writing: which his Majesty most graciously perusing, said he was willing to grant their request. Therefore for the first point of their petition he called for a staff to be brought him, and measuring thereupon the just length of his own arm, delivered it to the clothiers, saying: "This measure shall be called a yard, and no other measure throughout all the realm of England shall be used for the same; and by this shall men buy and sell, and we will so provide, that whatsoever he be that abuseth our subjects by any false measure, that he shall not only pay a fine for the same to the King, but also have his body punished by imprisonment.

"And as concerning the second point of your petition, because of my sudden departure out of the land, I know not better how to ease you of this grief of cracked money, this decree I make: because they account cracked money not current, I say none shall be current but cracked money. And therefore I will give present charge, that all the money through the land shall be slit, and so you shall suffer no loss.

"But now for your last request for the town of Halifax, where by thieves your clothes are so often stolen from you, seeing the laws already provided in that case are not

sufficient to keep men in awe, it is indeed high time to have sharper punishment for them."

With that Hodgekins unmannerly interrupted the King, saying: "Yea, in good faith, my Liege, there is nothing will keep them quiet till the carls be hanged by the crag. What care they for boring their eyes, so long as they may go groping up and down the country like false lazar loons, begging and craking?"

The King, smiling to hear this rough-hewn fellow make this reply, said: "Content thee, Hodgekins, for we will have redress for all: and albeit that hanging of men was never seen in England, yet seeing the corrupt world is grown more bold in all wickedness, I think it not amiss to ordain this death for such malefactors: and particularly to the town of Halifax I give this privilege, that whosoever they find stealing their cloth, being taken with the goods, that without further judgment they shall be hanged up. Thus," said the King, "have I granted what you request, and if hereafter you find any other thing that may be good for you, it shall be granted; for no longer would I desire to live among you, than I have care for the good of the Commonwealth." At which words ended, the King rose from his royal throne, while the clothiers on their knees prayed for both his health and happy success, and showed themselves most thankful for his Highness's favour. His Majesty bending his body towards them, said that at his return home, he would, by the grace of God, visit them.

CHAPTER V

How Simon's Wife of Southampton, being wholly bent on Pride and Pleasure, requested her Husband to see London

The clothiers being all come from London, Simon's wife of Southampton, who was with her husband very merry and pleasant, brake her mind unto him in this sort: " Good heavens, husband, will you never be so kind as to let me go to London with you? Shall I be penned up in Southampton like a parrot in a cage, or a capon in a coop? I would request no more of you in lieu of all my pains, cark, and care, but to have one week's time to see that fair city. What is life if it be not mixed with some delight? And what delight is more pleasing than to see the fashions and manners of unknown places? therefore good husband, if thou lovest me, deny me not this simple request. You know I am no common gadder, nor have oft troubled you with travel. Who knows, but this may be the last thing that ever I shall request at your hands?"

" Woman," quoth he, " I would willingly satisfy your desire, but you know it is not convenient for both of us to be abroad; our charge is so great, and therefore our care ought not to be small. If you will go yourself, one of my men shall go with you, and money enough you shall have in your purse: but to go with you myself, you see my business will not permit me."

" Husband," said she, " I accept your gentle offer,

and it may be I shall entreat my gossip Sutton to go along with me."

"I shall be glad," quoth her husband, "prepare yourself when you will."

When she had obtained this licence, she sent her man Weasell to Salisbury to know of Good wife Sutton if she would keep her company to London. Sutton's wife being as willing to go as she was to request, never resting till she had gotten leave of her husband: the which when she had obtained, casting in her mind their pleasure would be small, being but they twain: the wily woman sent letters by choleric Crabbe her man both to Gray's wife, and Fitzalan's wife, that they should meet them at Reading: who liking of the match, consented, and did so provide, that they met according to promise at Reading, and from thence with Cole's wife they went together, with each of them a man to London, each one taking up her lodging with a several friend.

When the merchants of London understood they were in town, they invited them every day to their own houses, where they had delicate good cheer: and when they went abroad to see the commodities of the city, the merchants' wives ever bore them company, being attired most dainty and fine: which when the clothiers' wives did see, it grieved their hearts they had not the like.

Now when they were brought to Cheapside, there with great wonder they beheld the shops of the goldsmiths; and on the other side the wealthy mercers, whose shops shined with all sorts of coloured silks: in Watling Street

they view the great number of drapers: in Saint Martin's, shoemakers: at Saint Nicholas Church, the flesh shambles: at the end of the old Change, the fishmongers: in Candlewick Street, the weavers: then came into Jews Street, where all the Jews did inhabit: then came they to Blackwell Hall, where the country clothiers did use to meet.

Afterwards they proceeded and came to Saint Paul's Church, whose steeple was so high that it seemed to pierce the clouds, on the top whereof was a great and mighty weathercock of clean silver, the which notwithstanding seemed as small as a sparrow to men's eyes, it stood so exceeding high: the which goodly weathercock was afterwards stolen away by a cunning cripple, who found means one night to up to the top of the steeple, and took it down: with the which, and a great sum of money which he had got together by begging in his lifetime, he builded a gate on the north side of the City, which to this day is called Cripplegate.

From thence they went to the Tower of London, which was builded by Julius Cæsar, who was Emperor of Rome. And where they beheld salt and wine, which had lain there ever since the Romans invaded this land, which was many years before our Saviour Christ was born; the wine was grown so thick, that it might have been cut like a jelly. And in that place also they saw the money that was made of leather, which in ancient time went current among the people.

When they had to their great contentment beheld all

this, they repaired to their lodgings, having also a sumptuous supper ordained for them, with all delight that might be. And you shall understand, that when the country weavers which came up with their dames saw the weavers of Candlewick Street, they had great desire presently to have some conference with them: and thus one began to challenge the other for workmanship.

Quoth Weasell, "I'll work with any of you all for a crown; take if you dare, and he that makes his yard of cloth soonest shall have it."

"You shall be wrought withal," said the other, "an if it were for ten crowns: but we will make this bargain, that each of us shall wind his own quills."

"Content," quoth Weasell: and so to work they went, but Weasell lost.

Whereupon another of them took the matter in hand, who lost likewise: so that the London weavers triumphed against the country, casting forth divers frumps.

"Alas, poor fellows," quoth they, "your hearts are good but your hands are ill."

Crabbe, hearing this, chafed like a man of law at the Bar, and he wagers with them four crowns to twain: the others agreed, and to work they go: but Crabbe conquered them all. Whereupon the London weavers were nipped in the head like birds, and had not a word to say. "Now," said Crabbe, "as we have lost nothing, so you have won nothing: and because I know you cannot be

right weavers, except you be good fellows, therefore if you will go with us, we will bestow the ale upon you."

"That is spoken like a good fellow and a weaver," quoth the other.

So along they went to the sign of the Red Cross. When they were set down and had drunk well they began merrily to prattle, and to extoll Crabbe to the skies. Then they broke up company, and went every one about his business; the London weavers to their frames, and the country fellows to their dames: who after their great banqueting and merriment, went every one home to their own houses, though with less money than they had brought out, yet with more pride.

Especially Simon's wife of Southampton, who told the rest of her gossips that she saw no reason, but that their husbands should maintain them as well as the merchants did their wives. "For I tell you what," quoth she, "we are as proper women (in my conceit) as the proudest of them all, as handsome of body, and as fair of face: then what reason is there (seeing our husbands are of as good wealth) but we should be as well maintained?"

"You say true, gossip," said Sutton's wife: "trust me, it made me blush to see them brave it out so gallantly, and we to go so homely."

"But," said the other, "I will have my husband to buy me a London gown, or in faith he shall have little quiet."

"So shall mine," said another.

"And mine too," said the third. And all of them sang the same note: so that when they came home, their husbands had no little to do. But especially Simon, whose wife daily lay at him for London apparel: to whom he said: "Good woman, be content, let us go according to our place and ability. What will the bailiffs think, if I should prank thee up like a peacock, and thou in thy attire surpass their wives? They would either think I were mad, or else that I had more money than I could well use: consider, I pray thee, good wife, that such as are in their youth masters, do prove in their age stark beggars. Besides that, it is enough to raise me up in the King's book, for many times men's coffers are judged by their garments. Why, we are country folk, and must keep ourselves in good compass: grey russet, and good hemp-spun cloth doth best become us: I tell thee wife, it were as undecent for us to go like Londoners, as it is for Londoners to go like courtiers."

"What a coil keep you," quoth she. "Are we not God's creatures as well as Londoners? And the King's subjects as well as they? Then, finding our wealth as good as theirs, why should we not go as gay as Londoners? No, husband, no, here is the fault, we are kept without it, only because our husbands be not so kind as Londoners. Why man, a cobbler there keeps his wife better than the best clothiers in this country: nay, I will affirm it, that the London oyster-wives, and the very kitchen-stuff criers, do exceed us in their Sunday attire: nay, more than that, I did see the water-bearer's wife

which belongs to one of our merchants, come in with a tankard of water on her shoulder, and yet half a dozen gold rings on her fingers."

"You may then think, wife," quoth he, "that she got them not with idleness. But wife, you must consider what London is, the chief and capital city of all the land, a place on which all strangers cast their eyes: it is, wife, the King's chamber and his Majesty's royal seat. To that city repair all nations under heaven. Therefore it is most meet and convenient that the citizens of such a city should not go in their apparel like peasants, but, for the credit of our country, wear such seemly habits as do carry gravity and comeliness in the eyes of all beholders."

"But if we of the country went so," quoth she, "were it not as great credit for the land as the other?"

"Woman," quoth her husband, "it is altogether needless, and in divers respects it may not be."

"Why then, I pray you," quoth she, "let us go dwell at London."

"A word soon spoken," said her husband, "but not so easy to be performed: therefore, wife, I pray thee hold thy prating, for thy talk is foolish."

"Yea, yea, husband, your old churlish conditions will never be left, you keep me here like a drudge and a droil, and so you may keep your money in your purse, you care not for your credit: but I tell you plain, I scorn it greatly that you should clap a gray gown on my back, as if I had not brought you two pence: before I was

married you swore I should have anything that I requested, but now all is forgotten."

And in saying this, she went in, and soon after she was so sick, that needs she must go to bed: and when she was laid, she drave out that night with many grievous groans, sighing and sobbing, and no rest would she take. And in the morning, when she would rise, the good soul fell down in a swoon, which put her maidens in a great fright, who, running down to their master, cried out: "Alas, alas! our dame is dead, our dame is dead!"

The good man hearing this, ran up in all haste, and there fell to rubbing chafing of her temples, sending for aqua vitæ, and saying: "Ah my sweetheart! Speak to me, good wife. Alack, alack! Call in the neighbours."

With that she lifted up her head, fetching a great groan, and presently swooned again, and much ado, I wis, he had to keep life in her: but when she was come to herself: "How dost thou, wife," quoth he? "What wilt thou have? For heaven's sake tell me if thou hast a mind to anything, and thou shalt have it."

"Away, dissembler!" quoth she, "how can I believe thee? Thou hast said as much to me a hundred times, and deceived me: it is thy churlishness that hath killed my heart: never was woman matched to so unkind a man."

"Nay, good wife, blame me not without cause. Thou knowest how dearly I love thee."

"Love me? no, no, thou didst never carry my love but on the tip of thy tongue," quoth she. "I dare swear

thou desirest nothing so much as my death, and for my part, I would thou hadst thy desire: but be content, I shall not trouble thee long." And with that, fetching a sigh, she swooned and gave a great groan.

The man seeing her in this case was wondrous woe: but so soon as they had recovered her, he said: "O my dear wife, if any bad conceit hath engendered this sickness, let me know it; or if thou knowest anything that may procure thy health, let me understand thereof, and I protest thou shalt have it, if it cost me all that ever I have."

"O husband," quoth she, "how may I credit your words, when for a paltry suit of apparel you denied me?"

"Well wife," quoth he, "thou shalt have apparel or anything else thou wilt request, if God send thee once health."

"O husband, if I may find you so kind, I shall think myself the happiest woman in the world, thy words have greatly comforted my heart: me thinketh, if I had it, I could drink a good draught of Rennish wine."

Well wine was sent for. "Oh," said she, "that I had a piece of chicken, I feel desirous of some meat."

"Glad I am of that," said her husband. And so the woman within a few days after was quite well. But you shall understand, that her husband was fain to dress her London-like ere he could get her quiet: neither would it please her except the stuff was bought in Cheapside: for out of Cheapside nothing would content her, were it never so good: insomuch, that if she thought a tailor

of Cheapside made not her gown, she would swear it were spoilt.

And having thus won her husband to her will, when the rest of the clothiers' wives heard thereof, they would be suited in the like sort too: so that ever since the wives of Southampton, Salisbury, Gloucester, Worcester, and Reading, went all as gallant and as brave as any Londoners' wives.

CHAPTER VI

How the Clothiers sent the King Aid into France; and how he overcame his Brother Robert, and brought him into England; and how the Clothiers feasted his Majesty and his Son at Reading

The King's Majesty being at the wars in France, against Lewis the French King, and Duke Robert of Normandy, sending for divers supplies of soldiers out of England, the clothiers at their own proper cost set out a great number, and sent them over to the King. Wherefore Roger Bishop of Salisbury, who governed the realm in the King's absence, did certify the King thereof, with his letters written in their commendations.

And afterwards it came to pass, that God sent his Highness victory over his enemies: and having taken his brother prisoner, he brought him most joyfully with him into England, and appointed him to be kept in Cardiff Castle prisoner, yet with this favour, that he might hunt

and hawk where he would, up and down the country; and in this sort he lived a good while.

The King being thus come home, after his winter's rest he made his summer's progress into the west country, to take view of all the chief towns: whereof the clothiers being advertised, they made great preparation against his coming, because he had promised to visit them all.

When his Grace came to Reading, he was entertained and received with great joy and triumph. Thomas Cole being the chief man of regard in all the town, the King honoured his house with his princely presence; where he, and his son, and nobles were highly feasted.

There the King beheld the great number of people that was by that one man maintained in work, whose hearty affection and love toward his Majesty did well appear, as well by their outward countenances, as their gifts presented unto him. And of Cole himself the King was so well persuaded, that he committed much trust to him, and put him in great authority in the town. Furthermore the King said, that for the love which those people bore him living, he would lay his bones among them when he was dead. "For I know not," said he, "where they may be better bestowed till the blessed day of resurrection, than among these my friends which are like to be happy partakers of the same."

Whereupon his Majesty caused there to be builded a most goodly and famous abbey: in which he might show his devotion to God by increasing His service, and leave example to other his successors to do the like.

Likewise within the town he after builded a fair and goodly castle, in the which he often kept his Court, which was a place of his chief residence during his life: saying to the clothiers, that seeing he found them such faithful subjects, he would be their neighbour, and dwell among them.

After his Majesty's royal feasting at Reading, he proceeded in progress till he had visited the whole west country, being wondrously delighted to see those people so diligent to apply their business: and coming to Salisbury, the Bishop received his Majesty with great joy, and with triumph attended on his Grace to his palace, where his Highness lodged. There Sutton the clothier presented his Highness with a broadcloth of so fine a thread, and exceeding good workmanship, and therewithal of so fair a colour, as his Grace gave commendation thereof, and as it is said, he held it in such high estimation, that thereof he made his Parliament robes, and the first Parliament that was ever in England was graced with the King's person in those robes: in requital whereof his Highness afterward yielded Sutton many princely favours.

It is to be remembered that Sutton of Southampton (seeing that the King had overpassed the place where he dwelt) came with his wife and servants to Salisbury, and against the King's going forth of that city, he caused a most pleasant arbour to be made upon the top of the hill leading to Salisbury, beset all with red and white roses, in such sort, that not any part of the timber could be

seen, within the which sat a maiden attired like a queen, attended on by a fair train of maidens, who at the King's approach presented him with a garland of sweet flowers, yielding him such honour as the ladies of Rome were wont to do to their Princes after their victories: which the King took in gracious part; and for his farewell from that country, they bore him company over part of the plain with the sound of divers sweet instruments of music. All which when his Grace understood was done at the cost of a clothier, he said he was the most honoured by those men, above all the mean subjects in his land. And so his Highness passed on to Exeter, having given great rewards to these maidens.

Thomas Dove and the residue of the clothiers, against his Grace's coming thither, had ordained divers sumptuous shows: first, there was one that presented the person of Augustus Cæsar the Emperor, who commanded after the Roman invasion, that their city should be called Augustus after his own name: which before times was called Isca, and of later years Exeter. There his Majesty was royally feasted seven days together, at the only cost of clothiers: but the divers delights and sundry pastimes, which they made there before the King and his nobles, is too long here to be rehearsed, and therefore I will overpass them to avoid tediousness.

His Grace then coasting along the country, at last came to Gloucester, an ancient city, which was builded by Glou, a British king, who named it after his own name. Here was his Majesty entertained by Gray the clothier,

who professed himself to be of that ancient family of Grays, whose first original issued out of that ancient and honourable castle and town of Rithin. Here was the King most bountifully feasted, having in his company his brother Robert (although his prisoner the same time). And his Grace being desirous to see the maidens card and spin, they were of purpose set to their work; among whom was fair Margaret with her white hand, whose excellent beauty having pierced the eyes of the Duke, it made such an impression on his heart, that afterward he could never forget her: and so vehemently was his affection kindled that he could take no rest, till by writing he had betrayed his mind.

Now when his Grace was come from thence, he went to Worcester, where William Fitzalan made preparation in all honourable sort to receive him: which man, being born of great parentage, was not to learn how to entertain his Majesty, being descended of that famous family whose patrimony lay about the town of Oswestry, which town his predecessors had enclosed with stately walls of stone. Although adverse fortune had so grievously frowned on them, that their children were fain to become tradesmen, whose hands were to them instead of lands, notwithstanding, God raised again the fame of this man, both by his great wealth, and also in his posterity, whose eldest son Henry, the King's godson, became afterwards the Mayor of London, who was the first Mayor that ever was in that city, who governed the same three and twenty years: and then his son Roger was the second Mayor.

The princely pleasures that in Worcester were shown to the King were many and marvellous, and in no place had his Majesty received more delight than here. Now when his Grace had thus taken view of all his good towns westward, and in that progress had visited these clothiers, he returned to London, with great joy of his Commons.

CHAPTER VII

How Hodgekins of Halifax came to Court, and complained to the King that his Privilege was nothing worth, because when they found any Offender, they could not get a Hangman to execute him: and how by a Friar a Gin was devised to chop off men's Heads of itself

After that Hodgekins had got the privilege for the town of Halifax, to hang up, presently without any further judgment, such thieves as stole their cloth in the night; all the clothiers of the town were exceeding glad, and persuaded themselves that now their goods would be safe all night, without watching them at all: so that, whereas before, the town maintained certain watchmen to keep their cloth by night, they were hereupon dismissed as a thing needless to be done, supposing with themselves, that seeing they would be straight hanged that were found faulty in this point, no man would be so desperate as to enterprise any such act. And indeed the matter being noised through the whole country, it made many to restrain such thievery.

Nevertheless, there was at that time living a notable thief named Wallis, whom in the north they called "Mighty Wallis," in regard of his valour and manhood. This man being most subtle in such kind of knavery, having heard of this late privilege, and therewithal of the town's security, said that once he would venture his neck for a pack of northern cloth: and therefore coming to one or two of his companions, he asked if they would be partners in his adventure. "And if," quoth he, "you will herein hazard your bodies, you shall be sharers in all our booties."

At length by many persuasions the men consented: whereupon late in the night, they got them all into a farrier's shop, and called up the folks of the house.

"What would you have," quoth they, "at this time of the night?"

Wallis answered, saying: "Good fellows, we would have you to remove the shoes off our horses' feet, and set them on again, and for your pains you shall be well pleased."

The smith at length was persuaded, and when he had plucked off all the shoes from their horses' feet, they would needs have them all set on again quite contrary, with the calkins forward that should stand backward.

"How? Fay, fay man," quoth the smith, "are ye sick fools? What, do you mean to break your craggs? Good faith, I trow the men be wood."

"Not so, smith," quoth they, "do thou as we bid

thee, and thou shalt have thy money: for 'tis an old proverb,

Be it better, or be it worse,
Please you the man that bears the purse ”.

“ Good faith, and so I shall,” said the smith; and so did as he was willed. When Wallis had thus caused their horses to be shod, to Halifax they went: where they without any let laded their horses with cloth, and so departed contrary way.

In the morning, so soon as the clothiers came to the field, they found that they were robbed: whereupon one ran to another to tell the things. Now when Hodgekins heard thereof, rising up in haste, he willed his neighbours to mark and see if they could not descry either the footsteps of men or horses. Which being done, they perceived that horses had been there, and seeking to pursue them by their footsteps, they went a clean contrary way, by reason that the horses were shod backward: and when in vain they had long pursued them, they returned, being never the nearer.

Now Wallis used his feat so long, that at length he was taken, and two more with him: whereupon, according to the privilege of the town, they put halters about the thieves’ necks to hang them up.

When they were come to the place appointed, Wallis and the rest being out of hope to escape death, prepared themselves patiently to suffer the rigour of the law. And therewith laying open the wickedness of their lives, grievously lamenting for their sins, at length, com-

mending their souls to God, they yielded their bodies to the grave: with which sight the people were greatly moved with pity, because they had never seen men come to hanging before. When they should have been hanged up, Hodgekins willed one of his neighbours to play the hangman's part, who would not by any means do it, although he was a very poor man: who for his pains should have been possessed of all their apparel. When he would not yield to the office, one of those, which had his cloth stolen, was commanded to do the deed: but he in like manner would not, saying: "When I have the skill to make a man, I will hang a man, if it chance my workmanship do not like me." And thus from one to another the office of hangman was posted off. At last a rogue came by, whom they would have compelled to do that deed.

"Nay, my masters," quoth he, "not so: but as you have got a privilege for the town, so you were best to procure a commission to make a hangman, or else you are like to be without."

"Neighbour Hodgekins," quoth one, "I pray you do this office yourself, you have had most loss, and therefore you should be the most ready to hang them yourself."

"No, not I," quoth Hodgekins, "though my loss were ten times greater than it is. Notwithstanding, look which of these thieves will take upon him to hang the other shall have his life saved: otherwise they shall all to prison till I can provide a hangman."

When Wallis saw the matter brought to this pass, he began stoutly to reply, saying: "My masters of the town of Halifax, though your privilege stretch to hang those up presently that are found stealing your goods, yet it gives you no warrant to imprison them till you provide them a hangman: myself, with these my fellows, have here yielded ourselves to satisfy the law, and if it be not performed, the fault is yours and not ours, and therefore we humbly take our leave from the gallows the 18th of August." And with that he leapt from the ladder, and hurled the halter at Hodgekins' face.

When the clothiers saw this, they knew not what to say, but, taking them by the sleeves, entreated to have their own again.

"Not so," quoth Wallis, "you get not the value of a pack or a bawbee. We have stolen your cloth, then why do you not hang us? Here we have made ourselves ready, and if you will not hang us, choose. A plague upon you," quoth he, "you have hindered me heaven knows what: I made account to dine this day in heaven, and you keep me here on earth, where there is not a quarter of that good cheer. Evil take you all, I was fully provided to give the gallows a box on the ear, and now goodness knows when I shall be in so good a mind again." And so he with the rest of his companions departed.

When Hodgekins saw how they flouted at their lenity, he was much moved in mind, and as he stood in his dumps chewing his cud, making his dinner with a dish

of melancholy, a Gray Friar reverently saluted him in this sort: "All hail, good man Hodgekins, happiness and health be ever with you. I am sorry, good man Hodgekins, that the great privilege which our King gave to this town comes to no greater purpose; the town hath suffered through their own peevishness an everlasting reproach this day, only because foolish pity hath hindered justice. Consider that compassion is not to be had upon thieves and robbers; pity only appertaineth to the virtuous sort, who are overwhelmed with the waves of misery and mischance. What great cause of boldness have you given to bad livers, by letting these fellows thus to escape, and how shall you now keep your goods in safety, seeing you fulfil not the law which should be your defence? Never think that thieves will make any conscience to carry away your goods, when they find themselves in no danger of death, who have more cause to praise your pity than to commend your wisdom; wherefore in time seek to prevent the ensuing evil. For mine own part, I have that care of your good, that I would work all good means for your benefit; and yet not so much in respect of your profit, as for the desire I have to uphold justice; and seeing I find you and the rest so womanish that you could not find in your hearts to hang a thief, I have devised how to make a gin, that shall cut off their heads without man's help, if the King will allow thereof."

When Hodgekins heard this, he was somewhat comforted in mind, and said to the friar, that if by his

cunning he would perform it, he would once again make suit to the King to have his grant for the same. The friar willed him to have no doubt in him; and so when he had devised it, he got a carpenter to frame it out of hand.

Hodgekins in the meantime posted up to Court, and told his Majesty that the privilege of Halifax was not worth a pudding.

“Why so?” said the King.

“Because,” quoth Hodgekins, “we can get never a hangman to truss our thieves: but if it will like your Grace, there is a feat friar that will make us a devise, which shall without the hand of man cut off the craggs of all such carls, if your Majesty will please to allow thereof.”

The King understanding the full effect of the matter, at length granted his petition: whereupon till this day it is observed in Halifax, that such as are taken stealing their cloth, have their heads chopped off with the same gin.

CHAPTER VIII

How the Bailiffs of London could get no man to be a Catch-poll:
and how certain Flemings took that Office upon them,
whereof many of them were fled into this Realm,
by reason of certain Waters that had drowned
a great part of their Country

The city of London being at that time governed by bailiffs, it came to pass, that in a certain fray two of their catch-polls were killed (for at that time they had not the name of Sergeants), and you should understand that their office was then so much hated and detested of Englishmen, that none of them would take it upon him; so that the bailiffs were glad to get any man whatsoever, and to give him certain wages to perform that office.

It came to pass, as I said before, that two of their officers by arresting of a man were at one instant slain, by means whereof the bailiffs were enforced to seek others to put in their rooms: but by no means could they get any, wherefore, according to their wonted manner, they made proclamation, that if there were any man that would present himself before them, he should not only be settled in that office during his life, but also should have such maintainance and allowance as for such men was by the city provided: and notwithstanding that it was an office most necessary in the Commonwealth, yet did the poorest wretch despise it, that lived in any estimation among his neighbours.

At last a couple of Flemings, which were fled into this

land by reason that their country was drowned by the sea, hearing the proclamation, offered themselves unto the bailiffs to serve in this place: who were presently received and accepted; and according to order had garments given them, which were of two colours, blue and red, their coats, breeches, and stockings whereby they were known and discerned from other men.

Within half a year after, it came to pass, that Thomas Dove of Exeter came up to London, who, having by his jollity and good fellowship brought himself greatly behindhand, was in danger to divers men of the city: among the rest, one of his creditors feed an officer to arrest him. The Dutchman who had not been long experienced in such matters, and hearing how many of his fellows had been killed for attempting to arrest men, stood quivering and quaking in a corner of the street to watch for Tom Dove, and having long waited, at length he spied him: whereupon he prepared his mace ready, and with a pale countenance proceeded to his office; at what time coming behind the man, suddenly with his mace he knocked him on the pate, saying: "I arrest you," giving him such a blow that he felled him to the ground. The catch-poll, thinking he had killed the man, left his mace behind him and ran away: the creditor ran after him, calling and crying that he should turn back again. But the Fleming would not by any means turn back, but got him quite out of the city, and took sanctuary at Westminster.

Dove being come to himself, arose and went to his

inn, no man hindering his passage, being not a little glad he is escaped the danger. Yet nevertheless, at his next coming to London, another catch-poll met with him, and arrested him in the King's name. Dove being dismayed at this mischievous mischance, knew not what to do: at last he requested the catch-poll that he would not violently cast him into prison, but stay till such time as he could send for a friend to be his surety: and although kindness in a catch-poll be rare, yet was he won with fair words to do him this favour: whereupon Dove desired one to go to his host Jarrat, who immediately came unto him, and offered himself to be Dove's surety.

The officer, who never saw this man before, was much mazed at his sight: for Jarrat was a great and mighty man of body, of countenance grim, and exceeding high of stature: so that the catch-poll was wonderfully afraid, asking if he could find never a surety but the devil, most fearfully entreating him to conjure him away, and he would do Dove any favour.

"What, will you not take my word?" quoth Jarrat.

"Sir," quoth the catch-poll, "if it were for any matter in the other world, I would as soon take your word as any one's, but seeing it is for a matter on earth, I would gladly have a surety."

"Why, thou cricket," quoth Jarrat, "thou maggat-a-pie, thou spinner, thou paltry spider, dost thou take me for a devil? Sirrah, take my word, I charge thee, for this man, or else good man butterfly, I'll make thee repent it."

The officer, while he was in the house, said he was content, but as soon as he came into the street, he cried, saying: " Help, help, good neighbours, or else the devil will carry away my prisoner:" notwithstanding, there was not one man would stir to be the catch-poll's aid. Which when he saw, he took fast hold on Tom Dove, and would not by any means let him go.

Jarrat seeing this made no more to do, but coming to the officer, gave him such a fillip on the forehead with his finger, that he felled the poor Fleming to the ground: and while he lay in the street stretching his heels, Jarrat took Dove under his arm and carried him home, where he thought himself as safe as King Charlemagne in Mount Alban. The next morning Jarrat conveyed Dove out of town, who afterward kept him in the country, and came no more into the catch-poll's claws.

CHAPTER IX

How Thomas of Reading was murdered at his Host's House of Colebrook, who also had murdered many before him, and how their Wickedness was at length revealed.

Thomas of Reading having many occasions to come to London, as well about his own affairs, as also the King's business, being in a great office under his Majesty, it chanced on a time, that his host and hostess of Colebrook (who through covetousness had murdered many

of their guests) appointed him to be the next fat pig that should be killed: for it is to be understood, that, when they plotted the murder of any man, this was always their formula: "Wife, there is now a fat pig to be had, if you want one." Whereupon she would answer thus: "I pray you put him in the hogsty till to-morrow."

This was when any man came thither alone without others in his company, and they saw he had great store of money. This man should then be laid in the chamber right over the kitchen, which was a fair chamber, and better set out than any other in the house: the best bedstead therein, though it were little and low, yet was it most cunningly carved, and fair to the eye: the feet whereof were fast nailed to the chamber floor, in such sort that it could not in any wise fall, and the bed that lay therein was fast sewed to the sides of the bedstead. Moreover, that part of the chamber whereupon the bedstead stood was made in such sort, that, by the pulling out of two iron pins below in the kitchen, it was to be let down and taken up by a draw-bridge, or in manner of a trap-door: moreover, in the kitchen, directly under the place where this should fall, was a mighty great caldron, wherein they used to seethe their liquor when they went to brewing. Now the men appointed for the slaughter were laid into this bed, and in the dead time of the night, when they were sound asleep, by plucking out the foresaid iron pins, down would the man fall out of his bed into the boiling caldron, and all the clothes

that were upon him: where being suddenly scalded and drowned, he was never able to cry or speak one word.

Then had they a little ladder over standing ready in the kitchen, by the which they presently mounted into the said chamber, and there took away the man's apparel, as also his money, in his mail or capcase: and then lifting up the said falling floor which hung by hinges, they made it fast as before. The dead body would they take presently out of the caldron, and throw it down the river, which ran near unto their house.

Now if in the morning any of the rest of the guests that had talked with the murdered man ere eve, chanced to ask for him, as having occasion to ride the same way, that he should have done, the good man would answer, that he took horse a good while before day, and that he himself did set him forward. The horse the good man would also take out of the stable, and convey him to a hay barn of his, that stood from his house a mile or two, whereof himself did always keep the keys full charily, and when any hay was to be brought from thence, with his own hands he would deliver it: then before the horse should go from thence, he would dismark him: as, if he had a long tail, he would make him curtail; or else crop his ears, or cut his mane, or put out one of his eyes: and by this means he kept himself unknown.

Now Thomas of Reading, as I said before, being marked and kept for a fat pig, he was laid in the same chamber of death, but by reason Gray of Gloucester chanced also to come that night, he escaped scalding.

The next time he came he was laid there again, but before he fell asleep, or was warm in bed, one came riding through the town and cried piteously that London was all a fire, and that it had burned down Thomas Becket's house in West Cheap, and a great number more in the same street. "And yet," quoth he, "the fire is not quenched." Which tidings when Thomas of Reading heard, he was very sorrowful, for of this same Becket that day he had received a great piece of money, and had left in his house many of his writings, and some that appertained to the King also: therefore there was no way but he would ride back to London presently, to see how the matter stood: thereupon making himself ready he departed. This cross fortune caused his host to frown. "Nevertheless," quoth he, "the next time will pay for all."

Notwithstanding, God so wrought, that they were prevented then likewise by reason of a great fray that happened in the house betwixt a couple that fell out at dice; insomuch as the murderers themselves were enforced to call him up, being a man in great authority, that he might set the house in quietness; out of the which by means of this quarrel, they doubted to lose many things.

Another time when he should have been laid in the same place, he fell so sick, that he requested to have somebody to watch with him; whereby also they could not bring their vile purpose to pass. But hard it is to escape the illfortunes whereunto man is allotted: for

albeit that the next time that he came to London, his horse stumbied and broke one of his legs as he would ride homeward, yet hired he another to hasten his own death; for there was no remedy but he should go to Colebrook that night: but by the way he was heavy asleep that he could scant keep himself in his saddle; and when he came near unto the town, his nose burst out suddenly a bleeding.

Well, to his inn he came, and so heavy was his heart that he could eat no meat: his host and hostess hearing he was so melancholy, came up to cheer him, saying: "Why, Master Cole, what ails you to-night? Never did we see you thus sad before: will it please you to have a quart of burnt sack?"

"With a good will," quoth he, "and I would that Tom Dove were here, he would surely make me merry, and we should lack no music: but I am sorry for the man with all my heart, that he is come so far behindhand: alas, so much can every man say, but what good doth it him? No, no, it is not words can help a man in this case, the man hath need of other relief than this. Let me see: I have but one child in the world and that is my daughter; half that I have is hers, the other half my wife's. What then, shall I be good to nobody but them? In conscience, my wealth is too much for a couple to possess: and what is our religion without charity? And to whom is charity more to be shown than to decayed householders? Good my host, lend me a pen and ink, and some paper; for I will write a letter unto the poor

man straight; and something I will give him. The alms which a man bestows with his own hands he shall be sure to have delivered, and who knows how long I shall live?"

With that his hostess dissembling answered: "Doubt not, Master Cole, you are like enough by the course of nature to live many years."

Quoth he: "I never found my heart so heavy before."

By this time pen, ink, and paper were brought, and he wrote as followeth: "In the Name of God, Amen. I bequeath my soul to God, and my body to the ground, my goods equally between my wife Elinor and my daughter Isabel. Item. I give to Thomas Dove of Exeter one hundred pounds, nay, that is too little, I give to Thomas Dove two hundred pounds in money, to be paid unto him presently upon his demand thereof, by my said wife and daughter."

"Ha, how sayest thou, host," quoth he, "is not this well? I pray you read it."

His host looking thereupon, said: "Why, Master Cole, what have you written here? You said you would write a letter, but methinks you have made a will, what need have to do thus? Thanks be to God, you may live many fair years."

"'Tis true," quoth Cole, "if it please God: and I trust this writing cannot shorten my days. But let me see, have I made a will? Now, I promise you, I did verily purpose to write a letter: notwithstanding, I have written that which God put into my mind. But look

again my host, is it not written there that Dove shall have two hundred pounds, to be paid when he comes to demand it?"

"Yes indeed," said his host.

"Well then, all is well," said Cole, "and it shall go as it is."

Then folding it up he sealed it, desiring that his host should send it to Exeter. He promised that he would: notwithstanding Cole was not satisfied, but after some pause, he would needs hire one to carry it. And so sitting down sadly in his chair again, upon a sudden he burst forth a weeping; they demanding the cause thereof he spake as followeth: "No cause of these fears I know: but it cometh into my mind, how when I set toward this my last journey to London, how my daughter took on, what a coil she kept me stay: and I could not be rid of the little baggage a long time, she did so hang about me; when her mother by violence took her away, she cried out most mainly: "O my father, my father, I shall never see him again."

"Alas, pretty soul," quoth his hostess, "this was but mere kindness in the girl, and it seemeth she is very fond of you. But alas, why should grieve at this? You must consider that it was but childishness."

"Aye it is indeed," said Cole, and with that he began to nod.

Then they asked him if he would go to bed?

"No," he answered, "although I am heavy, I have no mind to go to bed at all."

With that certain musicians of the town came to the chamber, and knowing Master Cole was there, drew out their instruments, and very solemnly began to play.

"This music comes very well," said Cole, and when he had listened awhile thereunto, he said: "Methinks these instruments sound like the ring of St. Mary Overies bells, but the bass drowns all the rest: and in my ear it is like a bell that rings a forenoon's knell. I pray you let them leave off, and bear them this simple reward."

The musicians being gone, his host asked if now it would please him to go to bed: "for," quoth he, "it is well near eleven of the clock."

With that Cole, beholding his host and hostess earnestly, began to start back, saying: "What ails you to look so like pale death? What have you done, that your hands are thus bloody?"

"What, my hands?" said the host. "Why, you may see they are neither bloody nor foul: either your eyes do greatly dazzle, or else fancies of a troubled mind do delude you."

"Alas, my host, you may see," quoth he, "how weak my wits are, I never had my head so idle before. Come, let me drink once more, and then I will to bed, and trouble you no longer."

With that he made himself ready, and his hostess was very diligent to warm a kerchief and put it about his head. Said he: "I am not sick, thank God, but such an alteration I find in myself as I never did before."

With that the screech-owl cried piteously, and anon

after the night raven sat croaking hard by his window. "Mercy upon me," quoth he, "what an ill-favoured cry do yonder carrion birds make." And therewithal he laid him down in his bed, from whence he never rose again.

His host and hostess, that all this while noted his troubled mind, began to commune betwixt themselves thereof. And the man said, he knew not what were best to be done. "By my consent," quoth he, "the matter should pass, for I think it is best not to meddle with him."

"What, man," quoth she, "faint you now? Have you done so many, and do you shrink at this?" Then, showing him a great deal of gold which Cole had left with her, she said: "Would it not grieve a body's heart to lose this? Hang the old churl, what should he do living any longer? He hath too much, and we have too little: tut, husband, let the thing be done, and then this is our own."

Her wicked counsel was followed, and when they had listened at his chamber door, they heard the man sound asleep. "All is safe," quoth they; and down into the kitchen they go, their servants being all abed, and pulling out the iron pin, the man dropped out into the boiling caldron. He being dead, they betwixt them cast his body into the river, his clothes they made away, and made all things as it should be: but when he came to the stable to convey thence Cole's horse, the stable door being open, the horse had got loose, and with a part of

the halter about his neck, and straw trussed under him as the ostlers had dressed him ere eve, he was gone out at the back ride, which led into a great field adjoining to the house, and so leaping divers hedges had got into a ground where a mare was grazing, with whom he kept up such a coil that they got into the highway, where one of the town, meeting them, knew the mare, and brought her and the horse to the man that owned her.

In the mean space the musicians had been at the inn, and in requital of their evening gift, they intended to give Cole some music in the morning. The goodman told them he took horse before day: likewise there was a guest in the house that would have borne him company to Reading, to whom the host also answered, that he himself set him upon horseback, and that he went long ago. Anon came the man that owned the mare, enquiring up and down, to know if none of them missed a horse. Who said no. At last he came to the sign of the Crane, where Cole lay: and calling the ostlers he demanded of them if they lacked one, and they said no.

"Why then," said the man, "I perceive my mare is good for something, for if I send her to the field single, she will come home double." Thus it passed on all that day and the night following.

But the next day after, Cole's wife musing that her husband came not home, sent one of her men on horseback to see if he could meet him. "And if," quoth she, "you meet him not betwixt this and Colebrook, ask for him at the Crane, but if you find him not there,

then ride to London: for I doubt he is either sick, or else some mischance hath fallen upon him."

The fellow did so, and asking for him at Colebrook, they answered, he went homeward from thence such a day. The servant musing what should be become of his master, and making enquiry in the town for him: at length one told him of a horse that was found on the highway, and no man knew whence he came. He going to see the horse, knew him presently, and to the Crane he goes with him. The host of the house perceiving this, was blank, and that night fled secretly away. The fellow going unto the Justice desired his help. Presently after word was brought that Jarman of the Crane was gone: then all the men said, he had sure made away with Cole: and the musicians told what Jarman said to them when they would have given Cole music. Then the woman being apprehended and examined, confessed the truth. Jarman soon after was taken in Windsor Forest. He and his wife were both hanged, after they had laid open all these things before expressed. Also he confessed, that he being a carpenter made that false falling floor, and how his wife devised it. And how they had murdered by that means forty persons. And yet notwithstanding all the money which they had gotten thereby, they prospered not, but at their death were found in debt.

When the King heard of this murder, he was for the space of seven days so sorrowful and heavy, as he would not hear any suit: giving also commandment, that the

house should quite be consumed with fire, wherein Cole was murdered, and that no man should ever build upon that cursed ground.

Cole's substance at his death was exceeding great: he had daily in his house an hundred men servants, and forty maids: he maintained besides above two or three hundred people, spinners, and carders, and a great many other householders. His wife after never married, and at her death she bestowed a mighty sum of money towards the maintaining of the new builded monastery. Her daughter was most richly married to a gentleman of great worship, and she had many children. And some say that the river wherein Cole was cast, did ever since carry the name of Cole, being called the river of Cole, and the town of Colebrook.

CHAPTER X

How divers of the Clothiers' Wives went to visit Sutton's
Wife of Salisbury and of their Merriment

Sutton's wife of Salisbury prepared great cheer: at what time Simon's wife of Southampton came thither, and so did divers others of the clothiers' wives to make merry at this feast. And whilst these dames sat at table Crabbe, Weasell, and Wren waited on the board, and as the old proverb speaketh, "Many women, many words", so fell it out at this time: for there was such a prattling that it passed: some talked of their husbands' forward-

ness, some showed their maids' sluttishness, other some deciphered the costliness of their garments, some told many tales of their neighbours: and to be brief, there was none of them but would have talked for a whole day.

But when Crabbe, Weasell, and Wren saw this they concluded betwixt themselves, that, as oft as any of the women had a good bit of meat on their trenchers, they offering a clean one, should catch that commodity: and so they did, but the women being busy in talk, marked it not. Thus with pleasant communication and merry quips they drove out the time till the fruit and spiced cakes were set on the board. At what time one of them began to ask the other, if they heard not of the cruel murder of Thomas of Reading?

"What," said the rest, "is old Cole murdered? When, I pray you, was the deed done?"

The other answered: "On Friday last."

"O good heavens!" said the women, "how was it done, can you tell?"

"As report goes," said the other, "he was roasted alive."

"O pitiful! Was he roasted? Indeed I heard one say, a man was murdered in London, and that he was sodden at an inn-holder's house, and served to the guests instead of pork."

"On, neighbour, it was not at London," said another; "I heard say it was coming from London, at a place called Colebrook: and it was reported for truth, that

the inn-holder made pies of him, and penny pasties; yea, and made his own servant eat a piece of him. But I pray you, good neighbour, can you tell me how it was known? some say, that a horse revealed it."

"Now by my faith," quoth Gray's wife, "it was told one of my neighbours, that a certain horse did speak and told great things."

"That sounds like a lie," said one of them.

"Why," said another, "may not a horse speak, as well as Balaam's ass?"

"It may be, but it is unlikely," said the third. "But where was the horse when he spake?"

"As some say," quoth she, "he was in the field, and had broke out of the stable, where he stood fast locked in mighty strong iron fetters, which he burst in pieces as though they had been straws, and broke down the stable door, and so got away."

The good man, coming in at these speeches, asked what that was they talked about?

"Marry," said his wife, "we hear that Cole of Reading is murdered. I pray you is it true?"

"Aye," said Sutton, "it is true, that vile villain his host murdered him, in whose house the man had spent many a pound."

"And did they make pies of him?" said his wife.

"No, no," quoth her husband, "he was scalded to death in a boiling caldron, and afterwards thrown into a running river that is hard by."

"But, good husband, how was he known?"

“By his horse,” quoth he.

“What, did he tell that his master was murdered? Could the horse speak English?”

“Marry, what a foolish woman you are,” quoth he, “to ask such a question! But to end this, you are all heartily welcome, good neighbours, and I am sorry you had no better cheer.”

So with thanks the women departed.

Thus have ye heard the divers tales that will be spread abroad of an evil deed.

THE MOST PLEASANT AND DELECTABLE
HISTORY OF JOHN WINCHCOMBE.

TO ALL FAMOUS CLOTH-WORKERS IN ENGLAND
I WISH ALL HAPPINESS OF LIFE,
PROSPERITY AND BROTHERLY
AFFECTION.

Among all manual arts used in this land, none is more famous for desert, or more beneficial to the Commonwealth, than is the most necessary art of clothing. And therefore as the benefit thereof is great, so are the professors of the same to be both loved and maintained. Many wise men, therefore, having deeply considered the same, most bountifully have bestowed their gifts for upholding of so excellent a commodity, which hath been, and yet is, the nourishing of many thousands of poor people. Wherefore, to you, most worthy Clothiers, do I dedicate this my rude work, which hath raised out of the dust of forgetfulness a most famous and worthy man, whose name was John Winchcombe, alias Jack of Newbury, of whose life and love I have briefly written, and in a plain and humble manner, that it may be the better understood of those for whose sake I took pains to compile it, that is, for the well-minded Clothiers: that herein they may behold the great worship and credit which men of this trade have in former time come unto.

Yours in all humble service,

T. D.

THE MOST PLEASANT AND DELECTABLE HISTORY OF JOHN WINCHCOMBE,

OTHERWISE CALLED JACK OF NEWBURY: AND
FIRST OF HIS LOVE AND PLEASANT LIFE.

CHAPTER I

In the days of King Henry the Eighth, that most noble and victorious Prince, in the beginning of his reign, John Winchcombe, a broad-cloth weaver, dwelt in Newbury, a town in Berkshire: who for that he was a man of merry disposition and honest conversation, was wondrous well beloved of rich and poor, specially because in every place where he came, he would spend his money with the best, and was not at any time found a churl of his purse. Wherefore being so good a companion he was called of young and old Jack of Newbury: a man so generally well known in all his country for his good-fellowship, that he could go in no place but he found acquaintance; by means whereof, Jack could no sooner get a crown, but straight he found means to spend it: yet had he ever this care, that he would always keep himself in comely and decent apparel: neither at any time

would he be overcome in drink, but so discreetly behave himself with honest mirth and pleasant conceits, that he was every gentleman's companion.

After that Jack had long lived this pleasant life, being (though he were but poor) in good estimation; it was his master's chance to die, and his dame to be a widow, who was a very comely ancient woman, and of reasonable wealth. Wherefore she, having a good opinion of her man John, committed unto his government the guiding of all her workfolk for the space of three years together. In which time she found him so careful and diligent, that all things came forward and prospered wondrous well. No man could entice him from his business all the week, by all the entreaty they could use: insomuch that in the end some of the wild youths of the town began to deride and scoff at him. "Doubtless," quoth one, "I think some spirit hath enchanted Jack to his treadles, and conjured him within the compass of his loom, that he can stir no farther."

"You say true," quoth Jack, "and if you have the leisure to stay till the charm be done, the space of six days and five nights, you shall find me ready to put on my holiday apparel, and on Sunday morning for your pains I will give you a pot of ale over against the May-pole."

"Nay," quoth another, "I'll lay my life, that as the salamander cannot live without the fire, so Jack cannot live without his dame."

"And I marvel," quoth Jack, "that you being of the

nature of a herring (which so soon as he is taken out of the sea, presently dies) can live so long with your nose out of the pot."

"Nay Jack, leave thy jesting," quoth another, "and go along with us, thou shalt not stay a jot."

"And because I will not stay, nor make you a liar," quoth Jack, "I'll keep me here; and so farewell."

Those then departed: and after they had for half a score times tried him to this intent, and saw that he would not be led by their lure, they left him to his own will. Nevertheless, every Sunday in the afternoon, and every holiday, Jack would keep them company, and be as merry as a pie, and having still good store of money in his purse, one or other would ever be borrowing of him, but never a penny of it again: which when Jack perceived, he would never after carry above twelve pence at once in his purse: and that being spent, he would straight return home merrily, taking his leave of the company in this sort:

My masters, I thank you, it's time to pack home,
For he that wants money is counted a mome:
And twelve pence a Sunday being spent in good cheer,
To fifty-two shillings amounts in the year;
Enough for a craftsman that lives by his hands;
And he that exceeds it shall purchase no lands.
For that I spend this day I'll work hard to-morrow,
For woe is that party that seeketh to borrow.
My money doth make me full merry to be:
And without my money none careth for me.
Therefore wanting money, what should I do here.
But haste home, and thank you for all my good cheer?

Thus was Jack's good government and discretion noted of the best and substantiallest men of the town: so that it wrought his great commendations, and his dame thought herself not a little blest to have such a servant, that was so obedient unto her, and so careful for her profit. For she had never a prentice that yielded her more obedience than he did, or was more dutiful: so that by his good example he did as much good as by his diligent labour and painful travail: which his singular virtue being noted by the widow, she began to cast a very good countenance to her man John, and to use very much talk with him in private: and first by way of communication, she would tell him unto what suitors she had, as also the great offers they made her, what gifts they sent, and the great affection they bare her, craving his opinion in the matter.

When Jack found the favour to be his dame's secretary he thought it to be an extraordinary kindness: and guessing by the yarn it would prove a good web, began to question with his dame in this sort. "Although it becometh not me your servant to pry into your secrets, nor to be busy about matters of your love; yet for so much as it hath pleased you to use conference with me in those causes, I pray you let me entreat you to know their names that be your suitors, and of what profession they be?"

"Marry, John," saith she, "that you shall, and I pray thee to take cushion and sit down by me."

"Dame," quoth he, "I thank you; but there is no

reason I should sit on a cushion till I have deserved it,"

"If thou hast not, thou mightest have done," said she. "But let us leave this, and proceed to our former matter. My first suitor dwells at Wallingford, by trade a tanner, a man of good wealth, and his name is Crafts, of comely personage and very good behaviour, a widower, well thought of among his neighbours: he hath proper land, a fair house well furnished, and never a child in the world, and he loves me passing well."

"Why then, Dame," quoth John, "you were best to have him."

"Is that your opinion?" quoth she. "Now trust me, so it is not mine: for I find two special reasons to the contrary: the one is, that he being overborne with years makes me over loath to love him: and the other, that I know one nearer hand."

"Believe me, Dame," quoth Jack, "I perceive store is no sore, and proffered is worse by ten in the hundred than that which is sought: but I pray you who is your second suitor?"

"John," quoth she, "it may seem immodesty in me to betray my lovers' secrets, yet seeing thy discretion, and being persuaded of thy secrecy, I will shew thee. The other is a man of middle years, but yet a bachelor, by occupation a tailor, and dwelling in Hungerford: by report a very good husband, such a one as hath crowns good store, and to me he professes much goodwill: for his person, he may please any woman."

"Aye Dame," quoth John, "because he pleaseth you."

“Not so,” saith she, “for my eyes are impartial judges in that case: and albeit my opinion may be contrary to others, if his art deceive not my eyesight, he is worthy of a good wife, both for his person and conditions.”

“Then trust me, Dame,” quoth John, “for so much as you are without doubt of yourself that you will prove a good wife, and so well persuaded of him, I should think you could make no better choice.”

“Truly, John,” quoth she, “there be also two reasons that move me not to like of him: the one, that being so large a ranger, he would at home be a stranger: and the other, that I like better of one nearer hand.”

“Who is that?” quoth Jack.

Saith she, “The third suitor is the Parson of Spinhomland, who hath a proper living: he is of a holy conversation and good estimation, whose affection to me is great.”

“No doubt, Dame,” quoth John, “you may do wondrous well with him, where you shall have no care but to serve God, and to make ready his meat.”

“O John,” quoth she, “the flesh and the spirit agree not: for one month studying for a sermon will make him forget his wife for a whole year.”

“Truly, Dame,” quoth John, “I must needs speak on his behalf: and the rather for that he is a man of the Church, and your near neighbour, to whom, as I guess, you bear the best affection: I do not think that he will be so much bound to his book, or subject to the spirit,

but that he will remember a woman at home or abroad."

"Well, John," quoth she, "I wis my mind is not that way: for I like better of one nearer hand."

"No marvel," quoth John, "you are so peremptory, seeing you have so much choice. But I pray ye, Dame, let me know this fortunate man that is so highly placed in your favour?"

"John," quoth she, "they are worthy to know nothing, that cannot keep something: that man, I tell thee, must go nameless: for he is the lord of my love: there is neither tanner, tailor, nor parson may compare with him: his presence is a preservative to my health, his sweet smiles my heart's solace, and his words heavenly music to my ears."

"Why then Dame," quoth Jack, "for your body's health, your heart's joy, and your ears' delight, delay not the time, but chop up the match."

"Well," quoth she, "I perceive thy consent is quickly got to any, having no care how I am matched, so I be matched. I wis, I wis I could not let thee go so lightly, being loath that any one should have thee, except I could love her as well as myself."

Then calling the rest of her servants, they fell to their meat merrily; and after supper the goodwife went abroad for her recreation, to walk awhile with one of her neighbours. And in the mean space John got him up into his chamber, and there began to meditate on this matter, bethinking himself what he were best to do: for well he perceived that his dame's affection was great towards

him. Knowing therefore the woman's disposition, and withal, that her estate was reasonable good, and considering beside that he should find a house ready furnished, servants ready taught, and all other things for his trade necessary, he thought it best not to let slip that good occasion, lest he should never come to the like. But again, when he considered her years to be unfitting to his youth, and that she that had sometime been his dame, would, perhaps, disdain to be governed by him that had been her poor servant, and that it would prove but a bad bargain, doubting many inconveniences that might grow thereby, he therefore resolved to be silent, rather than to proceed further. Wherefore he got himself straight to bed, and the next morning settled himself close to business.

Thus the matter rested for two or three days, in which space the goodwife daily devised which way she might obtain her desire, which was to marry her man. Many things came into her head, and sundry sleights in her mind, but none of them did fit her fancy, so that she became wondrous sad, and as civil as the nine Sibyls: and in this melancholy humour continued three weeks or a month, till at last it was her luck upon a Bartholomew Day (having a fair in the town) to spy her man John give a pair of gloves to a proper maid for a fairing, which the maiden with a bashful modesty kindly accepted, which kindled in her an inward jealousy: but notwithstanding very discreetly she covered it, and closely passed along unspied of her man or her maid.

She had not gone far, but she met with one of her suitors, namely the tailor, who was very fine and brisk in his apparel, and needs he would bestow the wine upon the widow: and after some faint denial, meeting with a gossip of hers, to the tavern they went, which was more courtesy than the tailor could ever get of her before, shewing herself very pleasant and merry: and finding her in such a pleasant humour, the tailor after a new quart of wine, renewed his old suit. The widow with patience heard him, and gently answered, that in respect of his great goodwill long time borne unto her, as also in regard to his gentleness, cost, and courtesy at that present bestowed, she would not flatly deny him. "Therefore," quoth she, "seeing this is not a place to conclude of such matters, if I may entreat you to come to my poor house on Thursday next, you shall be heartily welcome, and be further satisfied of my mind." And thus he paid shot and departed.

The tailor was scant out of sight when she met with the tanner: who albeit he was aged, yet lustily he saluted her, and to the wine she must, there was no nay. The widow, seeing his importunity, calls her gossip, and along they walked together. The old man called for wine plenty, and the best cheer in the house: and in a hearty manner he bid the widow welcome. They had not sitten long, but in comes a noise of musicians in tawny coats, who, putting off their caps, asked if they would have any music. The widow answered no, they were merry enough,

"Tut," quoth the old man, "let us hear, good fellows, what you can do, and play me 'The Beginning of the World'."

He had no sooner spoken, but the parson of Spin-homland with his corner-cap popped in at the door, who, seeing the widow sitting at the table, craved pardon and came in.

Quoth she, "Here is the priest."

"Marry," quoth the tanner, "in good time, for by this means we need not go far to be married."

"Sir," quoth the parson, "I shall do my best in convenient place."

"Wherein?" quoth the tanner.

"To wed her myself," quoth the parson.

"Nay, soft," said the widow. "One swallow makes not a summer, nor one meeting a marriage: as I lighted on you unlooked for, so came in hither unprovided for the purpose."

"I trust," quoth the tanner, "you came not without your eyes to see, your ears to hear, your hands to feel, nor your legs to go."

"I brought my eyes," quoth she, "to discern colours, my tongue to say no to questions I like not, my hands to thrust from me the things I love not, my ears to judge betwixt flattery and friendship, and my feet to run from such as would wrong me."

"Why then," quoth the parson, "by your gentle abiding in this place, it is evident that here are none but those you like and love."

"God forbid I should hate my friends," quoth the widow, "whom I take all those in this place to be."

"But there be divers sorts of loves," quoth the parson.

"You say truth," quoth the widow. "I love yourself for your profession, and my friend the tanner for his courtesy and kindness, and the rest for their good company."

"Yet," quoth the parson, "for the explaining of your love, I pray you drink to them you love best in the company."

"Seeing," quoth the widow, "you are so pleasantly bent, if my courtesy might not breed contention between you, and that I may have your favour to show my fancy, I will fulfil your request."

Quoth the parson, "I am pleased howsoever it be."

"And I," quoth the tanner.

"Why then," quoth she, "with this cup of claret wine and sugar I heartily drink to the minstrels' boy."

"Why, is it he you love best?" quoth the parson.

"I have reason," said she, "to like and love them best that will be least offended with my doings."

"Nay, widow," quoth they, "we meant you should drink to him whom you loved in the way of marriage."

Quoth the widow: "You should have said so at first. But to tell you my opinion, it is small discretion for a woman to disclose her secret affection in an open assembly: therefore, if to that purpose you spake, let me entreat you both to come home to my house on Thursday next, where you shall be heartily welcome, and

there be fully resolved of my mind: and so, with thanks at this time, I'll take my leave."

The shot being paid, and the musicians pleased, they all departed, the tanner to Wallingford, the parson to Spinhomland, and the widow to her own house: where in her wonted solemnness she settled herself to her business.

Against Thursday she dressed her house fine and brave, and set herself in her best apparel. The tailor nothing forgetting his promise, sent to the widow a good fat pig, and a goose. The parson being as mindful as he, sent to her house a couple of fat rabbits and a capon: and the tanner came himself and brought a good shoulder of mutton and half a dozen chickens, beside he brought a good gallon of sack, and half a pound of the best sugar. The widow, receiving this good meat, set her maid to dress it incontinent, and when dinner-time drew near the table was covered, and every other thing provided in convenient and comely sort.

At length the guests being come, the widow bade them all heartily welcome. The priest and tanner, seeing the tailor, mused what he did there: the tailor on the other side marvelled much at their presence. Thus looking strangely one at another, at length the widow came out of the kitchen, in a fair train gown stuck full of silver pins, a fine white cap on her head, with cuts of curious needlework under the same, and an apron before her as white as the driven snow: then very modestly making courtesies to them all, she requested them to sit down.

But they straining courtesy the one with the other, the widow with a smiling countenance took the parson by the hand, saying: "You, Sir, as you stand highest in the Church, so it is meet you should sit highest at the table: and therefore I pray you sit down there on the bench side. And, Sir," she said to the tanner, "as age is to be honoured before youth for their experience, so are they to sit above bachelors for their gravity:" and so she made him sit down on this side of the table, over against the parson. Then coming to the tailor she said, "Bachelor, though your lot be the last, your welcome is equal with the first, and seeing your place points out itself, I pray you take a cushion and sit down. And now," quoth she, "to make the board equal, and because it hath been an old saying, that three things are to small purpose if the fourth be away: if so it may stand with your favour, I will call a gossip of mine to supply this void place."

"With a good will," quoth they.

With that she brought in an old woman with scant ever a good tooth in her head, and placed her right against the bachelor. Then was the meat brought to the board in due order by the widow's servants, her man John being chief servitor. The widow sat down at the table's end, between the parson and the tanner, who in very good sort carved meat for them all, her man John waiting on the table.

After they had sitten a while, and well refreshed themselves, the widow, taking a crystal glass filled with claret

wine, drunk unto the whole company, and bade them welcome. The parson pledged her, and so did all the rest in due order. But still in their drinking the cup passed over the poor old woman's nose: insomuch that at length the old woman (in a merry vein) spake thus unto the company: "I have had much good meat among you, but as for the drink, I can nothing commend it,"

"Alas, good gossip," quoth the widow, "I perceive no man hath drunk to thee yet."

"No truly," quoth the woman, "for Churchmen have so much mind of young rabbits, old men such joy in young chickens, and bachelors in pig's flesh take such delight, that an old sow, a tough hen, or a grey coney are not accepted: and so it is seen by me."

The tailor said: "Take here the piece of a goose."

"Nay," said the old woman, "let goose go to his kind: eat yourself, and much good may it do your heart, sweet young man."

"The old woman lacks most of her teeth," quoth the tanner, "and therefore a piece of a tender chick is fittest for her."

"If I did lack as many of my teeth," quoth the old woman, "as you lack points of good husbandry, I doubt I should starve before it were long."

At this the widow laughed heartily, and the men were stricken into such a dump that they had not a word to say.

Dinner being ended, the widow with the rest rose from the table, and after they had sitten a pretty while talking

the widow called her man John to bring her a bowl of fresh ale, which he did. Then said the widow: "My masters, now for your courtesy and cost I heartily thank you all, and in requital of all your favour, love, and good will, I drink to you, giving you free liberty when you please to depart."

At these words her suitors looked so sourly one upon another, as if they had been newly champing of crabs. Which when the tailor heard, shaking up himself in his new russet jerkin, and setting his hat on one side, he began to speak thus: "I trust, sweet widow," quoth he, "you remember to what end my coming was hither to-day. I have long time been a suitor unto you, and this day you promised to give me a direct answer."

"'Tis true," quoth she, "and so I have: for your love I give you thanks, and when you please you may depart."

"Shall I not have you?" said the tailor.

"Alas!" quoth the widow, "you come too late."

"Good friend," quoth the tanner, "it is manners for younger men to let their elders be served before them: to what end should I be here if the widow should have thee? A flat denial is meet for a saucy suitor. But what sayest thou to me, fair widow?"

"Sir," said she, "because you are so sharp set I would wish you as soon as you can to wed."

"Appoint the time yourself," quoth the tanner.

"Even as soon," quoth she, "as you can get a wife: and hope not after me, for I am already promised."

"Now tanner, you may take your place with the tailor,"

quoth the parson, "for indeed the widow is for no man but myself."

"Master parson," quoth she, "many have run near the goal, and yet have lost the game, and I cannot help it though your hope be in vain."

"What," quoth the tailor, "is your merriment grown to this reckoning? I never spent a pig and a goose to so bad a purpose before: I promise you, when I came in, I verily thought that you were invited by the widow to make her and me sure together, and that this jolly tanner was brought to be a witness to the contract, and the old woman fetched in for the same purpose, else I would never have put up so many dry bobs at her hands."

"And surely," quoth the tanner, "I, knowing thee to be a tailor, did assuredly think that thou wast appointed to come and take measure for our wedding apparel."

"But now we are all deceived," quoth the parson, "and therefore as we came fools, we may depart hence like asses."

"That is as you interpret the matter," said the widow, "for I, ever doubting that a concluding answer would breed a jar in the end among you every one, I thought it better to be done at one instant, and in mine own house, than at sundry times, and in common taverns: and as for the meat you sent, as it was unrequested of me, so had you your part thereof, and if you think good to take home the remainder, prepare your wallets and you shall have it."

"Nay widow," quoth they, "though we have lost our labours, we have not altogether lost our manners: that which you have, keep; and God send to us better luck, and to you your heart's desire." And with that they departed.

The widow being glad she was thus rid her guests, when her man John with all the rest sat at supper, she sitting in a chair by spake thus unto them. "Well my masters, you saw that this day your poor dame had her choice of husbands, if she had listed to marry, and such as would have loved and maintained her like a woman."

"'Tis true," quoth John, "and I pray God you have not withstood your best fortune."

"Trust me," quoth she, "I know not, but if I have, I may thank mine own foolish fancy."

Thus it went on from Bartholomew-tide till it was near Christmas, at what time the weather was so wonderful cold that all the running rivers round about the town were frozen very thick. In the morning betime she made herself ready, and willed her man John to run and fetch her a link with all speed: "For," quoth she, "I have earnest business to do this morning." Her man did so. Which done, she made him to carry the link before her until she came to Saint Bartholomew's Chapel, where Sir John the priest, with the clerk and sexton stood waiting for her.

"John," quoth she, "turn into the chapel: for before I go further I will make my prayers to Saint Bartholomew, so shall I speed the better in my business."

When they were come in, the priest according to his order came to her, and asked where the bridegroom was?

Quoth she, "I thought he had been here before me. Sir," quoth she, "I will sit down and say over my beads, and by that time he will come."

John mused at this matter to see that his dame should so suddenly be married, and he hearing nothing thereof before. The widow, rising from her prayers, the priest told her that the bridegroom was not yet come.

"Is it true?" quoth the widow. "I promise you I will stay no longer for him, if he were as good as George a Green: and therefore dispatch," quoth she, "and marry me to my man John."

"Why, dame," quoth he, "you do but jest!"

"I trow, John," quoth she, "I jest not: for so I mean it shall be: and stand not so strangely, but remember that you did promise me on your faith not to hinder me when I came to the church to be married, but rather to set it forward: therefore set your link aside, and give me your hand: for none but you shall be my husband."

John, seeing no remedy, consented, because he saw the matter could not otherwise be amended: and married they were presently.

When they were come home, the widow caused the best cheer in the house to be set on the table, and to breakfast they went, causing her new husband to be set in a chair at the table's end, with a fair napkin laid on his trencher: then she called out the rest of her servants,

willing them to sit down and take part of their good cheer. They, wondering to see their fellow John sit at the table's end in their old master's chair, began heartily to smile, and openly to laugh at the matter, especially because their dame so kindly sat by his side: which she perceiving, asked if that were all the manners they could show before their master? "I tell you," quoth she, "he is my husband: for this morning we were married, and therefore henceforward look you acknowledge your duty towards him."

The folks looked one upon another, marvelling at this strange news. Which when John perceived, he said: "My masters, muse not at all: for although by God's providence and your dame's favour I am preferred from being your fellow to be your master, I am not thereby so much puffed up in pride, that any way I will forget my former estate. Notwithstanding, seeing I am now to hold the place of a master, it shall be a wisdom in you to forget what I was, and to take me as I am, and in doing your diligence you shall have no cause to repent that God made me your master."

The servants hearing this, as also knowing his good government before time, passed their years with him in dutiful manner.

The next day the report was over all the town, that Jack of Newbury had married his dame: so that when the woman walked abroad every one bade God give her joy. Every day therefore for the space of a month after she was married, it was her ordinary custom to go forth

in the morning among her gossips and acquaintances to make merry, and not to return home till night, without any regard of her household. Of which, at her coming home, her husband did oftentimes admonish her in very gentle sort, showing what great inconvenience would grow thereby: the which sometime she would take in gentle part, and sometimes in disdain, saying: "I am now in very good case, that he that was my servant but the other day will now be my master: this it is for a woman to make her foot her head. The day hath been when I might have gone forth when I would, and come in again when it had pleased me without controlment, and now I must be subject to every Jack's check. I am sure," quoth she, "that by my gadding abroad, and careless spending, I waste no goods of thine. I, pitying thy poverty, made thee a man, and master of the house, but not to the end I should become thy slave. I scorn, I tell thee true, that such a youngling as thyself should correct my conceit, and give me instructions, as if I were not able to guide myself: but in faith, in faith, you shall not use me like a babe nor bridle me like an ass: and seeing my going abroad grieves thee, where I have gone forth one day, I will go abroad three: and for one hour I will stay five."

"Well," quoth her husband, "I trust you will be better advised." And with that he went from her about his business, leaving her sweating in her fustian furies.

Thus the time passed on, till on a certain day she had been abroad in her wonted manner, and staying forth

very late, he shut the doors and went to bed. About midnight she comes to the door, and knocks to come in. To whom he looking out of the window, answered in this sort: "What? Is it you that keeps such a knocking? I pray you get hence, and request the constable to provide you a bed, for this night you shall have no lodging here."

"I hope," quoth she, "you will not shut me out of doors like a dog, or let me lie in the streets."

"Whether like a dog or not," quoth he, "all is one to me, knowing no reason, but that as you have stayed out all day for your delight, so you may lie forth all night for my pleasure. Both birds and beasts at the night's approach repair to their rest, and observe a convenient time to return to their habitation. Look but upon the poor spider, the frog, the fly, and every other silly worm, and you shall see all these observe time to return to their home: and if you, being a woman, will not do the like, content yourself to bear the brunt of your folly: and so farewell."

The woman hearing this made piteous moan, and in very humble sort entreated him to let her in, and to pardon this offence, and, while she lived, vowed never to do the like. Her husband, at length being moved with pity towards her, slipped on his shoes and came down in his shirt: the door being opened, in she went quaking, and as he was about to lock it again, in very sorrowful manner she said: "Alack husband, what hap have I? My wedding ring was even now in my hand, and I have

let it fall about the door: good, sweet John, come forth with the candle, and help me to seek it."

The man incontinent did so, and while he sought for that which was not there to be found, she whipped into the house, and clapping to the door, she locked her husband out. He stood calling with the candle in his hand to come in, but she made as if she heard not. Anon she went up into her chamber, and carried the key with her: but when he saw she would not answer, he presently began to knock as loud as he could at the door. At last she thrust her head out of the window, saying: "Who is there?"

"'Tis I," quoth John, "what mean you by this? I pray you come down and open the door that I may come in."

"What, sir," quoth she, "is it you? Have you nothing else to do but dance about the streets at this time of night, and like a sprite of the buttery hunt after crickets? Are you so hot that the house cannot hold you?"

"Nay, I pray thee sweetheart," quoth he, "do not gibe longer, but let me in."

"O sir, remember," quoth she, "how you stood even now at the window, like a judge on the bench, and in taunting sort kept me out of mine own house? How now Jack, am I even with you? What, John my man, were you so lusty to lock your dame out of doors? Sirra, remember you bade me go to the constable to get lodging, now you will have leisure to try if he will prefer

you to a bed. You, sir sauce, that made me stand in the cold, till my feet did freeze, and my teeth chatter, while you stood preaching of birds and beasts, telling me a tale of spiders, flies, and frogs: go try now if any of them will be so friendly as to let thee have lodging. Why go you not, man? Fear not to speak with them: for I am sure you shall find them at home: think not they are such ill husbands as you, to be abroad at this time of night."

With this John's patience was greatly moved: inso-much, that he deeply swore that, if she would not let him in, he would break down the door.

"Why, John," quoth she, "you need not be so hot, your clothing is not so warm, and because I think this will be a warning for you against another time, how you shut me out of my house, catch, there is the key, come in at thy pleasure."

With that she clapped to the casement, and got her to bed. Her husband got him a place among his apprentices, and there slept soundly. In the morning his wife rose betimes, and merrily made him a caudle, and asked how he did?

Quoth John: "Troubled with a shrew, who the longer she lives the worse she is: and as the people of Illyris kill men with their looks, so she kills her husband's heart with untoward conditions. But trust me, wife," quoth he, "seeing I find you of such crooked qualities, that, like the spider, ye turn the sweet flowers of good counsel into venomous poison, from henceforth I will

leave you to your own wilfulness, and neither vex my mind nor trouble myself to restrain you: the which if I had wisely done last night, I had kept the house in quiet and myself from cold."

"Husband," quoth she, "think that women are like starlings, that will burst their gall before they will yield to the fowler: or like the fish scolopendra, that cannot be touched without danger. Notwithstanding, as the hard steel doth yield to the hammer's stroke, being used to his kind, so will women to their husbands, where they are not too much crossed. And seeing ye have sworn to give me my will, I vow likewise that my wilfulness shall not offend you. I tell you, husband, the noble nature of a woman is such, that for their loving friends they will not stick (like the pelican) to pierce their own hearts to do them good. And therefore forgiving each other all injuries past, having also tried one another's patience, let us quench these burning coals of contention, and bequeath all our anger to the eating up of this caudle."

Her husband courteously consented: and after this time they lived long together in most godly, loving, and kind sort, till in the end she died, leaving her husband wondrous wealthy.

CHAPTER II

Of Jack of Newbury, his Great Wealth, and number of Servants:
and how he brought the Queen Katharine two hundred
and fifty Men prepared for the War at his own cost
against the Scots at Flodden Field

Now Jack of Newbury being a widower had choice of many wives, men's daughters of good credit, and widows of great wealth. Notwithstanding he bent his only like to one of his own servants, whom he had tried in the guiding of his house a year or two: and knowing her careful in her business, faithful in her dealing, an excellent housewife, thought it better to have her with nothing, than some others with much treasure. And besides, as her qualities were good, so was she of a very comely personage, of a sweet favour, and fair complexion. In the end he opened his mind unto her, and craved her good will. The maid (though she took this motion kindly) said she would do nothing without consent of her parents. Whereupon a letter was writ to her father, being a poor man dwelling at Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire: who being joyful of his daughter's good fortune speedily came to Newbury, where of her master he was friendly entertained: who after he had made him good cheer showed him all his servants at work, and every office in his house.

Within one room, being large and long,
There stood two hundred looms full strong:
Two hundred men, the truth is so,
Wrought in these looms all in a row.

By every one a pretty boy
Sat making quills with mickle joy:
And in another place hard by,
An hundred women merrily
Were carding hard with joyful cheer,
Who singing sat with voices clear.
And in a chamber close beside
Two hundred maidens did abide,
In petticoats of stammel red,
With milk-white kerchers on their head:
Their smock-sleeves like to winter snow
That on the western mountains flow,
And each sleeve with a silken band
Was featly tied at the hand.
These pretty maids did never lin,
But in that place all day did spin:
And spinning so with voices meet,
Like nightingales they sang full sweet.
Then to another room came they,
Where children were in poor array:
And every one sat picking wool,
The finest from the coarse to cull:
The number was seven score and ten,
The children of poor silly men:
And these their labours to requite
Had every one a penny at night,
Beside their meat and drink all day,
Which was to them a wondrous stay.
Within another place likewise
Full fifty proper men he spies,
And there were shearmen every one,
Whose skill and cunning there were shown:
And hard by them there did remain
Full four score rowers, taking pain.
A dye-house likewise had he then,
Wherein he kept full forty men:
And likewise in his fulling-mill

Full twenty persons kept he still.
Each week ten good fat oxen he
Spent in his house for certainty,
Beside good butter, cheese, and fish,
And many another wholesome dish.
He kept a butcher all the year,
A brewer eke, for ale and beer:
A baker for to bake the bread,
Which stood his household in good stead.
Five cooks within his kitchen great
Were all the year to dress his meat.
Six scullion boys unto their hands
To make clean dishes, pots, and pans:
Beside poor children that did stay
To turn the broaches every day.
The old man that did see this sight
Was much amazed, as well he might.
This was a gallant clothier sure,
Whose fame for ever shall endure.

When the old man had seen this great household and family, then was he brought into the warehouses, some being filled with wool, some with flocks, some with woad and madder, and some with broadcloths and kersies ready dyed and dressed, beside a great number of others, some stretched on the tenters, some hanging on poles, and a great many more lying wet in other places.

"Sir," quoth the old man, "I see you be abominable rich, and I am content you shall have my daughter, and God's blessing and mine light on you both."

"But, Father," quoth Jack of Newbury, "what will you bestow with her?"

"Marry, hear you," quoth the old man, "in I am but a poor man, but I thank God I am of good estate."

tion among my neighbours, and they will as soon take my voice for anything as a richer man's: this I will bestow you shall have with a good will, because I hear very good commendation of you in every place, therefore I will give you twenty nobles and a weaning calf, and when I die and my wife you shall have all my goods."

When Jack heard this offer he was straight content, making more reckoning of the woman's modesty than her father's money. So the marriage day being appointed, all things were prepared meet for the wedding, and royal cheer ordained: and most of the lords, knights, and gentlemen thereabout were invited thereunto. The bride being attired in a gown of sheep's russet, and a kirtle of fine worsted, her head attired with a billiment of gold hanging down behind her, which was curiously combed and plaited, according to the manner of those days: she was led to church between two sweet boys, with bridelaces and rosemary tied about their silken sleeves: the one of them was the son to Sir Thomas Parry, the other to Sir Francis Hungerford. Then was there a fair bride-cup of silver and gilt carried before her, wherein was a goodly branch of rosemary gilded very fair, hung about with silken ribands of all colours: next there was a noise of musicians that played all the way before her: after her came all the chiefest maidens of the country, some bearing great bridecakes, and some garlands of wheat finely gilded: and so she passed unto the church.

It is needless for me to make any mention here of the

bridegroom, who being a man so well beloved wanted no company, and those of the best sort, being divers merchant strangers of the still-yard, that came from London to the wedding. The marriage being solemnized, home they came in order as before: and to dinner they went: where there was no want of good cheer, no lack of melody. Rennish wine at this wedding was as plentiful as beer and ale: for the merchants had sent thither ten tuns of the best in the still-yard.

This wedding endured ten days, to the great relief of the poor that dwelt all about. And in the end the bride's father and mother came to pay their daughter's portion: which when the bridegroom had received he gave them great thanks. Notwithstanding he would not suffer yet to depart, and against they should go home their son-in-law came to them saying: "Father and Mother, all the thanks that my poor heart can yield I give you for your good will, cost, and courtesy, and while I live make bold to use me in any thing that I am able: and in requital of the gift you gave me with your daughter, I give you here twenty pounds to bestow as you find occasion: and for your loss of time, and charges riding up and down, I give you here as much broadcloth as shall make you a cloak and my mother a holiday gown: and when this is worn out, come to me and fetch more."

"O my good son," quoth the old woman, "Christ's benison be with thee ever more. For to tell thee truth, we had sold all our kine to make money for our daughter's marriage, and this seven year we should not have been

able to buy more. Notwithstanding we should have sold all that ever we had, before my poor wench should have lost her marriage."

"Aye," quoth the man, "I should have sold my coat from my back, and my bed from under me, before my girl should have gone without you."

"I thank you, my good Father and Mother," said the bride, "and I pray God long to keep you in health." Then the bride kneeled down and did her duty to her parents, who departed, weeping for joy.

Not long after this it chanced while our noble King was making war in France, that James King of Scotland, falsely breaking his oath, invaded England with a great army, and did much hurt upon the borders: where-upon on the sudden every man was appointed according to his ability to be ready with his men and furniture, at an hour's warning, on pain of death. Jack of Newbury was commanded by the justices to set out six men, four armed with pikes, and two with culivers, and to meet the Queen in Buckinghamshire, who was there raising a great power to go against the faithless King of Scots.

When Jack had received this charge, he came home in all haste, and cut out a whole broadcloth for horsemen's coats, and so much more as would make up coats for the number of a hundred men. In a short time he had made ready fifty tall men well mounted, in white coats and red caps with yellow feathers, and demi-lances in their hands, and fifty armed men on foot with pikes, and fifty shot in white coats also, every man so expert in the

handling of his weapon, as few better were found in the field. Himself likewise in complete armour on a goodly barbed horse, rode foremost of the company, with a lance in his hand, and a fair plume of yellow feathers in his crest, and in this sort he came before the justices: who at the first approach did not a little wonder what he should be.

At length when he had discovered what he was, the justices and most of the gentlemen gave him great commendation for this his good and forward mind showed in this action: but some other envying thereat, gave out words that he showed himself more prodigal than prudent, more vainglorious than well advised, seeing that the best noblemen in the country would scarce have done so much. "And no marvel," quoth they, "for such a one would call to his remembrance, that the King had often occasion to urge his subjects to such charges; and therefore would do at one time as they might be able to do at another: but Jack of Newbury, like the stork in the spring time, thinks the highest cedar too low for him to build his nest in, and ere the year be half done may be glad to have his bed in a bush."

These disdainful speeches being at last brought to Jack of Newbury's ear, though it grieved him much, yet patiently put them up till time convenient. Within a while after, all the soldiers of Berkshire, Hampshire, and Wiltshire, were commanded to show themselves before the Queen at Stoney Stratford, where her Grace, with many lords, knights, and gentlemen were assembled, -

with ten thousand men. Against Jack should go to the Queen, he caused his face to be smeared with blood, and his white coat in like manner. When they were come before her Highness, she demanded (above all the rest) what those white coats were? Whereupon Sir Henry Englefield, who had the leading of the Berkshire men, made answer: "May it please your Majesty to understand, that he which rideth foremost there is called Jack of Newbury, and all those gallant men in white are his own servants, who are maintained all the year by him: whom he at his own cost hath set out in this time of extremity to serve the King against his vaunting foe. And I assure your Majesty, there are not, for the number, better soldiers in the field."

"Good Sir Henry," quoth the Queen, "bring the man to me, that I may see him:" which was done accordingly. Then Jack with all his men alighted, and humbly on their knees fell before the Queen.

Her grace said, "Gentleman, arise:" and, putting forth her lily white hand, gave it to him to kiss.

"Most gracious Queen," quoth he, "gentleman I am none, nor the son of a gentleman, but a poor clothier, whose lands are his looms, having no other rents but what I get from the backs of little sheep: nor can I claim any cognisance but a wooden shuttle. Nevertheless, most gracious Queen, these my poor servants and myself, with life and goods, are ready at your Majesty's command, not only to spend our bloods, but also to lose our lives in defence of our King and Country."

"Welcome to me, Jack of Newbury," said the Queen, "though a clothier by trade, yet a gentleman by condition, and a faithful subject in heart: and if thou chance to have any suit in court, make account the Queen will be thy friend, and would to God the King had many such clothiers. But tell me, how came thy white coat besmeared with blood, and thy face so bescratched?"

"May it please your Grace," quoth he, "to understand, that it was my chance to meet with a monster, who had the proportions of a man, but headed like a dog, the biting of whose teeth was like the poisoned teeth of a crocodile, his breath like the basilisk killing afar off. I understand his name was Envy, who assailed me invisibly, like the wicked spirit of Mogwnce, who flung stones at men, and could not be seen: and so I came by my scratched face, not knowing when it was done."

"What was the cause this monster should afflict thee above the rest of thy company, or other men in the field?"

"Although, most sovereign Queen," quoth he, "this poisoned cur snarleth at many, and that few can escape the hurt of his wounding breath, yet at this time he bent his force against me, not for any hurt I did him, but because I surpassed him in hearty affection to my Sovereign Lord, and with the poor widow, offered all I had to serve my Prince and Country."

"It were happy for England," said the Queen, "if in every market town there were a gibbet to hang up curs

of that kind, who, like Æsop's dog lying in the manger, will do no good himself, nor suffer such as would do any."

This speech being ended, the Queen caused her army to be set in order, and in warlike manner to march toward Flodden, where King James had pitched his field. But as they passed along with drum and trumpet, there came a post from the valiant Earl of Surrey, with tidings to her Grace, that now she might dismiss her army, for that it had pleased God to grant the noble Earl victory over the Scots: whom he had by his wisdom and valiancy vanquished in fight, and slain their King in battle. Upon which news, her Majesty discharged her forces, and joyfully took her journey to London, with a pleasant countenance, praising God for her famous victory: and yielding thanks to all the noble gentlemen and soldiers for their readiness in the action, giving many gifts to the nobility, and great rewards to the soldiers: among whom she nothing forgot Jack of Newbury, about whose neck she put a rich chain of gold: at what time he with all the rest gave a great shout, saying: "God save Katherine, the noble Queen of England!"

Many noble men of Scotland were taken prisoners at this battle, and many more slain: so that there never came a greater foil to Scotland than this. For you shall understand, that the Scottish King made full account to be lord of this land, watching opportunity to bring to pass his faithless and traiterous practice: which was when our King was in France: in regard of which wars the

Scots vaunted there was none left in England, but shepherds and ploughmen, who were not able to lead an army, having no skill in martial affairs. In consideration of which advantage he invaded the country, boasting of victory before he had won: which was no small grief to Queen Margaret his wife, who was eldest sister to our noble King. Wherefore in disgrace of the Scots, and in remembrance of the famous achieved victory, the commons of England made this song, which to this day is not forgotten of many.

THE SONG

King Jamie had made a vow,
Keep it well if he may:
That he will be at lovely London
Upon Saint James his day.

"Upon Saint James his day at noon
At fair London will I be:
And all the lords in merry Scotland,
They shall dine there with me."

Then bespake good Queen Margaret,
The tears fell from her eye:
"Leave off these wars, most noble King,
Keep your fidelity.

"The water runs swift and wondrous deep,
From bottom unto the brim:
My brother Henry hath men good enough,
England is hard to win."

"Away," quoth he, "with this silly fool,
In prison fast let her lie,
For she is come of the English blood,
And for these words she shall die."

With that bespake Lord Thomas Howard,
The Queen's Chamberlain that day:
" If that you put Queen Margaret to death
Scotland shall rue it alway."

Then in a rage King Jamie did say:
" Away with this foolish morne:
He shall be hanged, and the other be burned,
So soon as I come home."

At Flodden Field the Scots came in,
Which made our Englishmen fain:
At Bramstone-green this Battle was seen:
There was King Jamie slain.

Then presently the Scots did flee,
Their cannons they left behind,
Their ensigns gay were won all away,
Our soldiers did beat them blind.

To tell you plain, twelve thousand were slain,
That to fight did stand:
And many prisoners taken that day,
The best in all Scotland.

That day made many a fatherless child,
And many a widow poor,
And many a Scottish gay lady
Sat weeping in her bower.

Jack with a feather was lipped all in leather,
His boastings were all in vain,
He had such a chance with a new Morris dance
He never went home again.

CHAPTER III

How all the Clothiers of England joined together and with
one consent complained to the King of their great
Hindrance sustained for want of Traffic into
other Countries, whereupon they
could get no Sale for their
Cloth.

By means of the wars which our King had with other countries, many merchant strangers were prohibited from coming to England, as also our own merchants (in like sort) were forbidden to have dealings with France or the Low Countries: by means whereof the clothiers had most of their cloth lying on their hands, and that which they sold was at so low a rate that the money scantily paid for the wool and workmanship. Whereupon they sought to ease themselves by abating the poor workmen's wages. And when that did not prevail, they turned away many of their people, weavers, shearmen, spinsters, and carders, so that where there were a hundred looms kept in one town, there were scant fifty: and he that kept twenty, put down ten. Many a poor man for want of work was hereby undone, and his wife and children: and it made many a poor widow to sit down hungry. This bred great woe in most places in England. In the end, Jack of Newbury intended, in the behalf of the poor, to make a supplication to the King: and to the end he might do it the more effectually, he sent letters to all the chief clothing towns in England to this effect.

THE LETTER

“ Well-beloved friends and brethren, having a taste of the general grief, and feeling in some measure the extremity of these times, I fell into consideration by what means we might best expel these sorrows, and recover our former commodity.

“ When I had well thought hereon, I found that nothing was more needful herein than a faithful unity among ourselves. This sore of necessity can no way be cured but by concord: for like as the flame consumes the candle, so men through discord waste themselves. The poor hate the rich, because they will not set them to work; and the rich hate the poor, because they seem burdensome: so both are offended for want of gain. Though our occupation be decayed, let us not deal with it as men do by their old shoes, which, after they have long borne them out of the mire, do in the end fling them on the dunghill: or as the husbandman doth by his bees, who for their honey burns them. Dear friends, consider that our trade will maintain us, if we uphold it: and there is nothing base, but that which is basely used.

“ Assemble therefore yourselves together, and in every town tell the number of those that have their living by means of this trade, note it in a bill, and send it to me. And because suits in Courts are like winter nights, long and wearisome, let there be in each place a weekly collection made to defray charges:

for I tell you, noblemen's secretaries and cunning lawyers have slow tongues and deaf ears, which must be daily anointed with the sweet oil of angels. Then let two honest, discreet men be chosen and sent out of every town to meet me at Blackwell Hall in London on All Saints Eve, and then we will present our humble petition to the King. Thus I bid you heartily farewell."

Copies of this letter being sealed, they were sent to all the clothing towns of England, and the weavers both of linen and woollen gladly received them: so that when all the bills were brought together, there were found of the clothiers, and those they maintained, three score thousand and six hundred persons. Moreover, every clothing town sending up two men to London, they were found to be an hundred and twelve persons, who in very humble sort fell down before his Majesty walking in Saint James his Park, and delivered to him their petition.

The King, presently perusing it, asked if they were all clothiers?

Who answered as it were one man, in this sort: "We are, most gracious King, all poor clothiers, and your Majesty's faithful subjects."

"My Lords," quoth the King, "let these men's complaint be thoroughly looked into: for I account them in the number of my best Commonwealth's men. As the clergy for the soul, the soldier for defence of his country, the lawyer to execute justice, the husbandman to feed

the body, so is the skilful clothier no less necessary for the clothing of the back, whom we may reckon among the chief yeomen of our land: and as the crystal sight of the eye is tenderly to be kept from harm because it gives the whole body light: so is the clothier whose cunning hand provides garments to defend our bodies from the winter's nipping frost. Many more reasons there are which may move us to redress their griefs, but let it suffice that I command to have it done."

With that, his Grace delivered the petition to the Lord Chancellor, and all the clothiers cried: "God save the King!"

But as the King was ready to depart, he suddenly turned about, saying: "I remember there is one Jack of Newbury. I muse he had not his hand in this business, who professed himself to be a defender of true labourers."

With that Jack showed himself to the King, and privately told his Grace anew of their grief. To whom his Majesty said: "Give thy attendance at the Council Chamber, where thou shalt receive an answer to thy content." And so his Highness departed.

Finally it was agreed that the merchants should traffic freely one with another, and that proclamations thereof should be made, as well on the other side the sea, as in our land. But it was long before this was effected, by reason the Cardinal, being Lord Chancellor, put off the matter from time to time. And because the clothiers thought it not best to depart before it was ended, they

gave their daily attendance at the Cardinal's house: but spent many days to no purpose: sometimes they were answered, My Lord was busy, and could not be spoken with; or else he was asleep, and they durst not wake him; or at his study, and they would not disturb him; or at his prayers, and they durst not displease him: and still one thing or another stood in the way to hinder them. At last, Patch the Cardinal's fool, being by their often repairing thither well acquainted with the clothiers, came unto them, and said: "What, have you not yet spoken with my Lord?"

"No truly," quoth they, "we hear that he is busy, and we stay till his Grace be at leisure."

"Is it true?" said Patch. And with that in all haste he went out of the hall, and at last came in again with a great bundle of straw on his back.

"Why, how now, Patch," quoth the gentlemen, "what wilt thou do with that straw?"

"Marry," quoth he, "I will put it under these honest men's feet, lest they should freeze ere they find my Lord at leisure."

This made them all to laugh, and caused Patch to bear his straw away again. "Well, well," quoth he, "if it cost you a groat's worth of faggots at night, blame not me."

"Trust me," said Jack of Newbury, "if my Lord Cardinal's father had been no hastier in killing of calves than he is in despatch of poor men's suits, I doubt he had never worn a mitre." This he spake betwixt them-

selves softly, but yet not so softly, but that he was overheard by a flattering fellow that stood by, who made it known to some of the gentlemen, and they straight certified the Cardinal thereof.

The Cardinal (who was of a very high spirit and a lofty aspiring mind) was marvellously displeased at Jack of Newbury: wherefore in his rage he commanded and sent the clothiers all to prison, because the one of them should not sue for the others' release. Four days lay these men in the Marshalsea, till at last they made their humble petition to the King for their release: but some of the Cardinal's friends kept it from the King's sight. Notwithstanding, the Duke of Somerset, knowing thereof, spake with the Lord Cardinal about the matter, wishing he would speedily release them, lest it breed him some displeasure: "For you may perceive," quoth the Duke, "how highly the King esteems men of that faculty."

"Sir," quoth the Cardinal, "I doubt not but to answer their imprisonment well enough, being persuaded that none would have given me such a quip but an heretic: and I dare warrant you were this Jack of Newbury well examined, he would be found to be infected with Luther's spirit, against whom our King hath of late written a most learned book, in respect whereof the Pope's Holiness hath intitled his Majesty Defender of the Faith: therefore I tell you such fellows are fitter to be faggots for fire, than fathers of families: notwithstanding, at your Grace's request, I will release them."

Accordingly the Cardinal sent for the clothiers afore him to Whitehall, his new-built house by Westminster, and there bestowing his blessing upon them, said: "Though you have offended me I pardon you: for as Stephen forgave his enemies that stoned him, so do I forgive you that high trespass committed in disgrace of my birth; for herein do men come nearest unto God, in showing mercy and compassion. But see hereafter you offend no more. Touching your suit, it is granted, and to-morrow shall be published through London."

This being said they departed: and according to the Cardinal's words, their business was ended. The still-yard merchants joyful hereof, made the clothiers a great banquet. After which each man departed home, carrying tidings of their good success: so that within short space clothing was again very good, and poor men as well set on work as before.

CHAPTER IV

How Jack of Newbury, keeping a very good House, both for his Servants and relief of the Poor, won great credit thereby: and how one of his wife's Gossips found fault therewith.

"Good morrow, good gossip: now by my truth I am glad to see you in health. I pray you how doth Master Winchcombe?"

"Truly gossip you are welcome," saith Mistress Winchcombe. "I pray you to sit down, and we will have a morsel of something by and by."

"Nay truly, gossip, I cannot stay," quoth she, "in truth I must be gone: for I did not even step in to see how you did."

"You shall not choose but stay a while," quoth Mistress Winchcombe: and with that a fair napkin was laid upon the little table in the parlour, hard by the fire side, whereon was set a good cold capon, and a great deal of other good cheer, with ale and wine plenty.

"I pray you, good gossip, eat, and beshrew me if you spare," quoth the one.

"I thank you heartily, good gossip," saith the other, "But, good gossip, I pray you tell me, doth your husband love you well, and make much of you?"

"Yes truly, I thank God," quoth she.

"Now by my troth," said the other, "it were a shame for him if he should not: for though I say it before your face, though he had little with you, you were worthy to be as good a man's wife as his."

"Trust me, I would not change my John for my lord Marquess," quoth she. "A woman can be but well, for I live at heart's ease, and have all things at will, and truly he will not see me lack any thing."

"Marry. God's blessing on his heart," quoth her gossip, "it is a good hearing. But pray you, tell me, I heard say your husband is chosen for our Burgess in the Parliament House; is it true?"

"Yes verily," quoth his wife. "I wis it is against his will: for it will be no small charges unto him."

"Tush woman, what talk you of that? Thanks be to God, there is never a gentleman in all Berkshire that is better able to bear it. But hear you, gossip, shall I be so bold as to ask you one question more?"

"Yes, with all my heart," quoth she.

"I heard say that your husband would now put you in your hood and silk gown. I pray you is it true?"

"Yes in truth," quoth Mistress Winchcombe, "but far against my mind, gossip: my French-hood is bought already, and my silk gown is a-making: likewise the goldsmith hath brought home my chain and bracelets: but I assure you, gossip, if you will believe me, I had rather go an hundred miles than wear them: for I shall be so ashamed that I shall not look upon any of my neighbours for blushing."

"And why, I pray you?" quoth her gossip. "I tell you, dear woman, you need not be any thing abashed or blush at the matter, especially seeing your husband's estate is able to maintain it: now trust me truly, I am of opinion you will become it singularly well."

"Alas," quoth Mistress Winchcombe, "having never been used to such attire, I shall not know where I am, nor how to behave myself in it: and beside, my complexion is so black, that I shall carry but an ill favoured countenance under a hood."

"Now, without doubt," quoth her gossip, "you are

to blame to say so: beshrew my heart if I speak it to flatter, you are a very fair and well favoured young woman as any in Newbury. And never fear your behaviour in your hood: for I tell you true, as old and withered as I am myself, I could become a hood well enough, and behave myself as well in such attire as any other whatsoever, and I would not learn of never a one of them all: what, woman, I have been a pretty wench in my days, and seen some fashions. Therefore you need not to fear, seeing both your beauty and comely personage deserves no less than a French-hood. And be of good comfort. At first, possibly, folks will gaze something at you: but be not abashed for that, it is better they should wonder at your good fortune than lament at your misery. But when they have seen you two or three times in that attire, they will afterward little respect it: for every new thing at the first seems rare, but being once a little used, it grows common."

"Surely, gossip, you say true," quoth she, "and I am but a fool to be so bashful: it is no shame to use God's gifts for our credit, and well might my husband think me unworthy to have them, if I would not wear them: and though I say it, my hood is a fair one as any one wears in this country, and my gold chain and bracelets are none of the worst sort, and I will show them you, because you shall give your opinion upon them." And therewith she stepped from her chamber and fetched them forth.

When her gossip saw them, she said: "Now beshrew

my fingers but these are fair ones indeed. And when do you mean to wear them, gossip?"

"At Whitsuntide," quoth she, "if God spare my life."

"I wish that well you may wear them," quoth her gossip, "and I would I were worthy to be with you when you dress yourself, it should be never the worse for you. I would order the matter so, that you should set every thing about you in such sort, as never a gentlewoman of them all should stain you."

Mistress Winchcombe gave her great thanks for her favour, saying, that if she needed her help, she would be bold to send for her.

Then began her gossip to turn her tongue to another tune, and now to blame her for her great housekeeping. And thus she began: "Gossip, you are but a young woman, and one that hath had no great experience of the world, in my opinion you are something too lavish in expenses: pardon me, good gossip, I speak but for good will, and because I love you, I am the more bold to admonish you. I tell you plain, were I the mistress of such a house, having such a large allowance as you have, I would save £20 a year that you spend to no purpose."

"Which way might that be?" quoth Mistress Winchcombe. "Indeed I confess I am but a green housewife, and one that hath had but small trial in the world, therefore I would be very glad to learn anything that were for my husband's profit and my commodity."

“Then listen to me,” quoth she: “you feed your folk with the best of the beef, and the finest of the wheat, which in my opinion is a great oversight: neither do I hear of any knight in this country that doth it. And to say the truth, how were they able to bear that port which they do, if they saved it not by some means? Come thither, and I warrant you that you shall see but brown bread on the board: if it be wheat and rye together, it is a great matter, and the bread highly commended: but most commonly they eat either barley bread, or rye mingled with pease, and such like coarse grain: which is doubtless but of small price, and there is no other bread allowed, except at their own board. And in like manner for their meat: it is well known, that necks and points of beef is their ordinary fare: which because it is commonly lean, they seethe therewith now and then a piece of bacon or pork, thereby they make their pottage fat, and therewith drive out the rest with more content. And thus you must learn to do. And besides that, the midriffs of the oxen, the sheep’s heads, and the gathers, which you give away at your gate, might serve them well enough: which would be a great sparing to your other meat, and by this means you would save in the year much money, whereby you might the better maintain your hood and silk gown. Again, you serve your folk with such superfluities, that they spoil in a manner as much as they eat: believe me were I their dame, they should have things more sparingly, and then they would think it more dainty.”

"Trust me, good gossip," quoth Mistress Winchcombe, "I know your words in many things to be true: for my folks are so corn-fed that we have much ado to please them in their diet: one doth say this is too salt, and another saith this is too gross, this is too fresh, that too fat, and twenty faults they will find at their meals. I warrant you they make such parings of their cheese, and keep such chipping of their bread, that their very orts would serve two or three honest folk to their dinner."

"And from whence I pray you proceeds that," quoth her gossip, "but of too much plenty? But i'faith were they my servants, I would make them glad of the worst crumbs they cast away, and thereupon I drink to you, and thank you for my good cheer with all my heart."

"Much good may it do you, good gossip," said Mistress Winchcombe, "and I pray you when you come this way, let us see you."

"That you shall verily," quoth she, and so away she went.

After this Mistress Winchcombe took occasion to give her folks shorter commons, and coarser meat than they were wont to have: which at length being come to the good man's ear, he was very much offended therewith, saying: "I will not have my people thus pinched of their victuals. Empty platters make greedy stomachs; and where scarcity is kept, hunger is nourished: and therefore wife, as you love me, let me have no more of these doings."

"Husband," quoth she, "I would they should have

enough: but it is a sin to suffer, and a shame to see the spoil they make. I could be well content to give them that which is sufficient, but it grieves me, to tell you true, to see how coy they are, and the small care they have in wasting of things: and I assure you, the whole town cries shame of it, and it hath bred me no small discredit for looking no better to it. Trust me no more, if I was not checked in my own house about this matter, when my ears did burn to hear what was spoken."

"Who was it checked thee, I pray thee tell me? Was it not your old gossip, dame dainty, mistress trip and go? I believe it was."

"Why, man, if it were she you know she hath been an old housekeeper, and one that hath known the world; and that she told me was for good will."

"Wife," quoth he, "I would not have thee to meddle with such light brained housewives, and so I have told thee a good many times, and yet I cannot get thee to leave her company."

"Leave her company? Why, husband, so long as she is an honest woman, why should I leave her company? She never gave me hurtful counsel in all her life, but hath always been ready to tell me things for my profit, though you take it not so. Leave her company? I am no girl, I would have you well know, to be taught what company I should keep. I keep none but honest company, I warrant you. Leave her company, ketha? Alas, poor soul, this reward she hath for her good will. I wis, she is more your friend than you are your own."

“ Well, let her be what she will be,” said her husband.
And so away he went.

CHAPTER V

How a Draper in London, who owed Jack of Newbury much
Money, became bankrupt; whom Jack of Newbury found
carrying a porter's basket on his neck; and how he
set him up again at his own cost: which
Draper afterwards became an
Alderman of London

There was one Randal Pert, a draper, dwelling in
Watling Street, that owed Jack of Newbury five hundred
pounds at one time: who in the end fell greatly to decay,
in so much that he was cast into prison, and his wife
and her poor children turned out of doors. All his
creditors except Winchcombe had a share of his goods,
never releasing him out of prison so long as he had one
penny to satisfy them. But when this tidings was brought
to Jack of Newbury's ears, his friends counselled him to
lay his action against him.

“ Nay,” quoth he, “ if he be not able to pay me when
he is at liberty, he will never be able to pay me in prison:
and therefore it were good for me to forbear my money
without troubling him, as to add more sorrow to his
grieved heart, and be never the nearer. Misery is
trodden down by many, and once brought low, it is
seldom or never relieved: therefore he shall rest for me
untouched, and I would to God he were clear of all

other men's debts, so that I gave him mine to begin the world again."

Thus lay the poor draper a long time in prison, in which space, his wife, which before for daintiness would not foul her fingers, nor turn her head aside for fear of hurting the set of her neckenger, was glad to go about and wash bucks at the Thames' side, and to be a char-woman in rich men's houses: her soft hand was now hardened with scouring, and instead of gold rings upon her lily fingers, they were now filled with chaps provoked by drudgeries.

At last, Master Winchcombe being, as you heard, chosen against the Parliament a Burgess for the town of Newbury, and coming up to London for the same purpose, when he alighted at his inn, he left one of his men there, to get a porter to bring his trunk up to the place of his lodging. Poor Randal Pert, which lately before was come out of prison, having no other means of maintenance, became a porter to carry burdens from one place to another, having an old ragged doublet and a torn pair of breeches, with his hose out at the heels, and a pair of old broken slip-shoes on his feet, a rope about his middle instead of a girdle, and on his head an old greasy cap, which had so many holes in it, that his hair started through it: who as soon as he heard one call for a porter, made answer straight: "Here, master, what is it that you would have carried?"

"Marry," quoth he, "I would have this trunk borne to the Spread Eagle at Ivybridge."

"You shall, master," quoth he, "but what will you give me for my pains?"

"I will give thee two pence."

"A penny more and I will carry it," said the porter. And so being agreed, away he went with his burden, till he came to the Spread Eagle door, where, on a sudden espying Master Winchcombe standing, he cast down the trunk, and ran away as hard as ever he could.

Master Winchcombe wondering what he meant thereby, caused his man to run after him, and so fetch him back again: but when he saw one pursue him, he ran then the faster; and in running he lost one of his slipshoes, and then another: ever looking behind him, like a man pursued with a deadly weapon, fearing every twinkling of an eye to be thrust through. At last down he fell in the street all along, sweating and blowing, being quite worn out of breath: and so by this means the serving man overtook him, and taking him by the sleeve, being as windless as the other, stood blowing and puffing a great while ere they could speak one to another.

"Sirrah," quoth the serving man, "you must come to my master, you have broken his trunk all to pieces, letting it fall."

"O for God's sake," quoth he, "let me go, or else Master Winchcombe of Newbury will arrest me, and then I am undone for ever."

Now by this time Jack of Newbury had caused his trunk to be carried into the house, and then he walked along to know what the matter was: and when he heard

the porter say that he would arrest him, he wondered greatly, and having quite forgot Pert's favour, being so greatly changed by imprisonment and poverty, he said: "Wherefore should I arrest thee? Tell me, good fellow: for my own part I know no reason for it."

"O Sir," quoth he, "I would I knew none either."

Then asking him what his name was, the poor man, falling down on his knees, said: "Good Master Winchcombe, bear with me and cast me not into prison: my name is Pert, and I do not deny but that I owe you five hundred pound: yet for the love of God take pity upon me."

When Master Winchcombe heard this he wondered greatly at the man, and did as much pity his misery, though as yet he made it not known, saying: "Passion of my heart man, thou wilt never pay me thus: never think being a porter to pay five hundred pound debt. But this hath your prodigality brought you to, your thriftless neglecting of your business, that set more by your pleasure than your profit." Then looking better upon him, he said: "What, never a shoe to thy foot, hose to thy leg, pand to thy neck, nor cap to thy head? O Pert, this is strange: but wilt thou be an honest man, and give me a bill of thy hand for my money?"

"Yes sir, with all my heart," quoth Pert.

"Then come to the scrivener's," quoth he, "and dispatch it, and I will not trouble thee."

The scrivener looking upon the poor man, and seeing him in that case, said to Master Winchcombe: "Sir, you

were better to let it be a bond, and have some sureties bound with him."

"Why, scrivener," quoth he, "dost thou think this is not a sufficient man of himself for five hundred pound?"

"Truly, sir," said the scrivener, "if you think him so, you and I are of two minds."

"I'll tell thee what," quoth Master Winchcombe, "were it not that we are all mortal, I would take his word as his bill or bond; the honesty of a man is all."

"And we in London," quoth the scrivener, "do trust bonds far better than honesty. But sir, when must this money be paid?"

"Marry, scrivener, when this man is Sheriff of London."

At that word the scrivener and the people standing by laughed heartily, saying: "In truth, sir, make no more ado, but forgive it him: as good to do the one as the other."

"Nay, believe me," quoth he, "not so: therefore do as I bid you."

Whereupon the scrivener made the bill to be paid when Randal Pert was Sheriff of London, and thereunto set his own hand for a witness, and twenty persons more that stood by, set to their hands likewise.

Then he asked Pert what he should have for carrying the trunk.

"Sir," quoth he, "I should have three pence, but

seeing I find you so kind, I will take but two pence at this time."

"Thanks, good Pert," quoth he, "but for thy three pence, there is three shillings; and look thou come to me to-morrow morning betimes."

The poor man did so: at what time Master Winchcombe had provided for him out of Burchin Lane, a fair suit of apparel, merchant like, with a fair black cloak, and all other things fit to the same. Then he took him a shop in Canweek Street, and furnished the same shop with a thousand pounds worth of cloth: by which means and other favours that Master Winchcombe did him, he grew again into great credit, and in the end became so wealthy, that while Master Winchcombe lived he was chosen Sheriff, at what time he paid five hundred pounds, every penny, and after died an Alderman of the City.

GLOSSARY

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| angel, a coin. | husband, manager. |
| barbed horse, armour clad. | incontinent, at once. |
| billiment, part of headdress. | ketha, quotha, quoth he. |
| bucks, dirty linen. | lin, cease. |
| calkin (of horseshoe), the turned-up rim. | maggot-a-pie, magpie. |
| candleweek street, Cannon Street. | mail, bag. |
| capcase, bag. | mome, blockhead. |
| carl, churl. | neckenger, neckercher. |
| cark, trouble. | noise, band. |
| catchpoll, constable. | orts, remnants. |
| converse, associate. | pie, magpie. |
| craking, croaking. | quill, reed for winding thread. |
| crag, neck. | St. Mary Overie's, Southwark Cathedral. |
| curtail, short tail. | shot, cost, payment. |
| dry bob, jest. | silly, simple. |
| favour, look. | stammel, cerise red. |
| feat, clever. | stillyard, place of German mer- chants. |
| frump, gibe. | tenter, stretcher, pole. |
| gin, trick. | wood, mad. |